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THE ACTOR:

A TREATISE ON THE ART OF PLAYING.

Interspersed with

Theatrical Anecdotes, Critical Remarks on Plays, and Occasional Observations on Audiences.

Quod verum atque decens
Curo & rogo, & omnis in hoc sum.

HOR.

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MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

TO THE

MANAGERS

OF THE

TWO THEATRES.

GENTLEMEN,

AN author unknown to you, and who ſhall ever remain ſo, takes the liberty of laying before you an eſſay on the rules and laws of a profeſſion, which it is greatly your Intereſt to be acquainted with in its utmoſt latitude. That you are at preſent perfectly informed of the full extent of many of them, we have, during the courſe of the laſt Seaſon, had abundant proof; there are, however, ſome more eſſential ones, which thoſe who frequent the performances you exhibit, imagine have not ſufficiently taken up your attention.

You will find we have paſs'd the more curſorily over the former, that we might,

in a treatiſe not intended to tire you with its length, have room to expatiate as much as ſhould be neceſſary on the others.

The great principle we have laid down in this work is, That to be qualified to judge, a man muſt be unprejudic'd; and we flatter ourſelves that it will appear we are ſo in an eminent degree: you will here find a great deal of juſtly-merited praiſe, together with much as juſtly-merited cenſure. We hope we ſpeak in both not only our own ſenſe of the matter, but that of your audiences in general. We ſhall be glad to find the juſt praiſe we have beſtowed on the more deſerving, heightening in them that honeſt pride which is the ſureſt guardian of their fame, and the nobleſt incentive to engage their attention to the real ornaments of their profeſſion: and if, on the other hand, our cenſure may prevent thoſe who are incapable of playing intereſting characters, from engaging for the future in ſo romantick a purſuit of praiſe, even tho' the ignorance, or the private views, of a Manager, ſhould tempt them to do ſo, our views will be fully anſwer'd.

But

But the good effects of our admonitions we expect to receive, Gentlemen, more immediately from you: we see you at the head of companies, in each of which there are many actors of great merit, some of moderate merit, and some of no merit at all: we hope we shall make it appear that your own interests, as well as our satisfaction, require it of you to do hereafter what we are almost ashamed to mention, as a thing yet to be done,——to proportion, in every representation, the burthen to the shoulders that are to bear it, and to give us, in the best characters, the best players you have for them.

You cannot be uninform'd that Mons. *Sainte Albine* some years ago gave laws to the *French* stage, which were founded on nature and reason, and therefore very unexceptionable: we know they were coolly received indeed by the players, but the audiences thought so well of them, that they interested themselves to see many of them put in execution; and the immediate consequence was, the raising that theatre to a degree of reputation it never did, nor ever cou'd have risen

to without them. What *St. Albine* laid before the *French* audiences, we ſubmit to the opinion of the Managers of the *Britiſh* theatres; we know, Gentlemen, that no body is ſo able to judge of the merits of our obſervations as you are, and we flatter ourſelves, that when you are convinced 'tis your intereſt to conſider things in the light in which we repreſent them, you will not fail to give them your ſanction, by introducing them into practice. You have now a long vacation before you, to conſider of theſe things in; and we hope to ſee the future emulation between you, exerting itſelf not in diſputing who ſhall have moſt good performers in pay, but who ſhall employ them moſt adequately to their talents, moſt to their own honour, and to the ſatisfaction of their audiences.

If this prove the conſequence, we ſhall not be ſollicitous of telling the world to whom they are indebted for giving you theſe hints; or you, who it is that has taken ſo much pains to prove himſelf,

Gentlemen,

Your very ſincere Friend,

and obedient humble Servant:

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THE ACTOR.

PART the FIRST.

Of the principal Advantages which a Player ought to have from Nature.

AMONG the many arts which ſhould never be exercis'd but by perſons who are happy in a variety of natural accompliſhments, there are few, to the excelling in which they are more eſſential, than in performing well in tragedy and comedy. The Actor is expected to delude the imagination, and to affect the heart: and in order to his attaining to perfection in this difficult taſk, nature muſt have been aſſiſtant to him in an uncommon manner.

It is eſſential to our being rationally pleas'd with theatrical repreſentations, that the performers to whom the principal parts are allotted, perfectly keep up the illuſion we are to be entertained with: as it is peculiarly from them, that we expect what is to move and affect us.

Theſe performers, therefore, more than all the reſt, ought to be ſelected from among perſons, whom nature has particularly favour'd.

In enquiring what are the natural endowments immediately neceſſary to *performers on the ſtage in general*, we ſhall endeavour to diſcuſs certain preliminary points, which have not hitherto been properly or ſufficiently explain'd; and thence proceed to examine, what are the peculiar qualifications neceſſary to *particular actors*.

Perhaps it would not be eaſy to do the publick a more acceptable ſervice on the ſubject of theſe entertainments, than by informing thoſe who are ambitious to appear in the capital parts of our plays, (tho' nature has deny'd them the neceſſary means) that it is impoſſible to ſucceed in ſo ill-judg'd an attempt.

This we ſhall endeavour to explain, in the ſecond book of this firſt part.

BOOK

BOOK I.

In which many of the common Prejudices of the Age are considered; and Observations made on the necessary Qualifications of Performers on the Stage in general.

CHAP. I.

Can an Actor excell in his Profession, without a good Understanding?

A Thing is not always the more true, because it is generally affirm'd. We frequently hear people who pretend to be the best judges of dramatic performances, declare that some of the modern actors, who have a general and not wholly undeserv'd applause, have mean understandings: But we flatter ourselves, it may be easily proved, that either the actors, whom these severe criticks censure, have more sense than they have the discernment to distinguish in them; or that they have less merit, even than they allow them, and have the good fortune to be esteemed much better performers, than they really are.

It is not easy to avoid the allowing a good understanding, even to persons who excel in arts that are merely mechanick; and surely the accomplish'd actor, if he have no other title to it than that of his being such, ought not to be de-

ny'd the ſame conceſſion. Is it poſſible that a man can, in a ſeries of different parts, continually command our applauſe, if he have not a juſt and diſtinguiſhing apprehenſion, to give him at all times, and always with propriety, the neceſſary admonitions for his juſt deportment under every circumſtance of every one of them? and indeed, if he have not a nice diſcernment to perceive the affinities of things, and the dependances of the incidents on one another? for this muſt ever be the directing needle that points out the invariable pole, both to the poet and performer.

It is not enough to entitle a player to our applauſe, that he remembers every ſtriking incident, every beauty in his part; 'tis equally neceſſary, that he diſtinguiſh the true, the exact manner, under which every ſingle beauty muſt be repreſented. It is not ſufficient that he knows how to raiſe his paſſion, he muſt know how to raiſe it by juſt rules, and to aſſign it its peculiar bounds and height, according to the degree the circumſtances of his part require; below which it muſt not ſink, and beyond which it muſt not riſe.

It is not ſufficient that his figure be in general good and proper for the ſtage; and that his face can mark the changes of his ſoul: we ſhall be diſſatisfied with him if his perſon be not always kept in a proper attitude; and ſhall quarrel even with the expreſſion of his countenance if it do not regulate itſelf at every circumſtance, not only to the paſſion, but to the degree of the paſſion it is to deſcribe to us.

It is not only eſſential to his ſucceſs that he never let a paſſage which he delivers, loſe the leaſt part of its force, or of its delicacy, in his ſpeaking it;

it: when he has thus given it all the juſtice imaginable, he muſt add to that all the graces that a ſtudy'd delivery and action can beſtow on it. He is not to content himſelf with following his author ſtrictly and faithfully; but in many places, he muſt aſſiſt and ſupport him; he muſt even in ſome inſtances become a ſort of author himſelf;* he muſt know not only how to give the proper expreſſion to every fineſſe the poet has thrown into his part, but he muſt frequently add new ones; and not only execute, but create graces. A ſtart, a geſture, nay, a mere attention, properly employ'd, are often of as happy effect as a brilliant piece of wit in comedy, or a noble ſentiment in tragedy; a peculiar cadence in the actor's voice, or a bare pauſe artfully thrown in, have frequently produc'd applauſe from a ſentence, which if it had been delivered by an inferior performer, would not have had any attention paid to it by the hearers.

The art of exciting the paſſions in an audience by the performer's raiſing them in himſelf, with a judgment and exactneſs proportion'd juſtly to the ſeveral circumſtances, is at leaſt as difficult to arrive at, as that of giving its due force, or true delicacy, to every paſſage. The poet who has made himſelf a maſter of the power of commanding the paſſions and throwing the ſoul into every degree of them that he pleaſes, exerts his utmoſt efforts in vain, and uſes every art without ſucceſs, when the actor does not join his ſkill to the raiſing the effects he intends by them. When even a good

* The truth of this aſſertion will be made evident, when we come to ſpeak of the fineſſes in the art of the player, in the ſecond part of this work.

good part falls into bad hands, it is no uncommon thing to ſee the audience laugh, where the author meant to have drawn their tears.

Few people are able to judge of the good underſtanding that is neceſſary to the player, in order to his keeping up the ſenſe and ſpirit of a ſentiment; to prevent his exaggerating it to bombaſt, or weakening and debaſing it to nothing in the delivery; and to his diſtinguiſhing the different ſteps thro' which his author means to lead the paſſions and the imaginations of his audience; and by which he is to carry himſelf from oppoſite to oppoſite affections.

There is an art of colouring peculiar to poetry, which, tho' in many reſpects it be different from that in painting, is yet to be conducted by the ſame kind of rules. We require of both the ſame ſtrength of tints, and the ſame diſtinctions in the diſtribution of the brightneſſes and ſhadows; the ſame caution in obſerving the degradation of lights; and the ſame art in throwing objects to a diſtance, or in bringing them immediately under the eye.

It is not only the poet, but the player alſo, of whom we require this ſkill in colouring the objects he is to preſent to us; he, like the painter, muſt be a maſter of this ingenious theory of ſhadows, the ſkilful application of which is by an inſenſible gradation to conduct the eye from the firſt and moſt ſtriking part of the picture to whatever lies obſcured in ſhades behind. As the painter often gives us a proſpect of an extenſive country in a very little piece, the poet ſometimes in the compaſs of a few lines, gives his actor a multitude of different impreſſions: in this caſe the one as well as the other is to exert his ſkill in

diſtin-

distinguishing to us, that things tho' placed near to one another in the small bounds of the representation, are not neighbours to each other in the one case in the heart, or in the other in the prospect which is the subject of the picture. The player ought to have as strict an attention to these differences, and as nice a judgment in them, as the poet; he must no more than the painter, confound those things together between which nature has plac'd a vast distance, because they are to be seen in a small compass: But then he must very nicely conduct himself in those sudden transitions, thro' which he is to make one passion succeed to another; and that perhaps its contrary.

The player has equal necessity for address and for precision, to give the true strength to every passage in his part, and to convey the sentiments delivered to his care, in their proper force and beauty. Nor are these qualifications less useful to him in dictating the necessary gestures which are to accompany the expression; and in the forming not only his countenance, but his whole person, according to the nature of the age, station, and character of the person he represents; and even in the proportioning the tone of his voice and the attitudes of his figure, to the situation in which he is plac'd.

It is evident then that a good understanding is as necessary to a player, as a pilot is to a vessel at sea: 'Tis the understanding alone that governs the helm, that directs the whole fabrick, and calculates and marks out its course. There are some instances indeed in which an author has given such force and perspicuity to a sentiment, that the understanding of the person who delivers

it in his words, is not intereſted in the reception it meets with from the audience; but theſe are only particular caſes.

The reader who has ſeen *Milton*'s maſque of *Comus* repreſented ſome months ago at *Drury Lane*, will not be at a loſs for an inſtance of this truth. The frugal manager of that theatre, who ſeems to underſtand it as the great ſecret of his office to treat an audience as cheap as he can, and to give them no more good things at once than are juſt ſufficient to bring them together; had, at this time, converted a gaudy ſcene which had been almoſt the only merit in a former entertainment, into a palace for *Comus*. He ſeemed to have conſidered it as an unneceſſary piece of luxury (to uſe the words of a very celebrated writer, who chuſes to be nameleſs on theſe occaſions) to treat more than one of the ſenſes of his audience at a time; and as the ſight was here to be charm'd, there appear'd no ſort of neceſſity for addreſſing any thing to the underſtanding.

On this occaſion we had an opportunity of ſeeing the truth of the propoſition juſt delivered in a very eminent manner; and found that *Milton* was able to do more, much more, than all that *Addiſon* or his warmeſt friends and commentators have ſaid of him; even to make the man who play'd the part of the eldeſt brother, deliver words that ſhou'd command applauſe.

We flatter ourſelves that every body will allow in this caſe the underſtanding of the perſon who pronounc'd *Milton*'s words, was not at all concern'd in procuring them a good reception; yet we remember the whole houſe rung with the joy of the audience on hearing the noble

ble ſentiments thrown into that part where the author declares,

Virtue cou'd ſee to do what Virtue ought
By her own radiant light; Tho' ſun and moon
Were in the flat ſeas ſunk.——
He that has light within his own clear breaſt,
May ſit i'th' center and enjoy bright day;
But he that hides a dark ſoul and foul thoughts
Benighted walks under the mid-day ſun,
Himſelf is his own dungeon.

Not the violent emphaſis this moſt judicious ſpeaker contriv'd to throw upon the word *Flat* in the third line, or on *Under* in the laſt but one; not even his ſinking the word *Virtue* in both places where it occurs, cou'd prevent the audience from perceiving that there was more merit in theſe lines, than in half the tragedies that have been applauded within theſe ſeven years.

Nay we had occaſion to obſerve, that not only an elevated ſentiment, but the mere ſpirit of poetry, when rais'd to the pitch it ſtands at in this piece, cou'd ſupport itſelf in the ſame manner independantly of the machine it was utter'd from; when we heard from the ſame unmeaning mouth, and almoſt in the ſame breath,

Wiſdom's ſelf
Oft ſeeks a ſweet retired ſolitude,
Where with her beſt nurſe contemplation,
She plumes her feathers and lets grow her wings,
That in the various buſtle of reſort
Were all too ruffled and ſometimes impair'd.

And afterwards,

No evil thing that walks by night,
In fog, or fire; by lake or mooriſh fen;
Blue meagre hag, or ſtubborn unlaid ghoſt;
That breaks his magick chains at Curfew time,
Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity.

It muſt be allow'd that a long familiarity with the ſtage will ſometimes ſupply the place of judgment and good ſenſe in the performer: Sometimes alſo he may have been oblig'd to nature for peculiar qualifications, and that in ſo eminent a degree, that often when they are brought into uſe, tho' it be merely done by a kind of inſtinct, not by a judicious adapting of them to the ſcenes, they ſhall happen to ſuit ſo well with the circumſtances of the character he repreſents, that we cannot deny him a high applauſe. This however is no more than the deception of a moment; an abſurdity that follows immediately after in the voice, the geſture, or the expreſſion of the countenance of this lucky player, lets us into his true character; and we find that it was not the man, but merely his organiſation that before merited our applauſe.

How truly pityable is the condition of that author, who is under a neceſſity of entruſting his ſucceſs, his reputation, in a new piece, to theſe miſerable automatons: And on the other ſide, how happy is the fortune of that writer, who ſees his play fall into ſuch hands, that every character of it, not only among the capital, but the inferior ones too, is given to a performer who will not only be capable of preſerving all the ſpi-

rit of the moſt ſhining parts of it to its utmoſt height, but of adding graces to thoſe which are leſs eminent or ſtriking.

The comic writers are above all others happy in falling into ſuch hands, as their pieces are often in a great meaſure ſupported by the delicate and judicious addreſs of the performer: How ought the poet in this way to congratulate himſelf when he finds his principal character in the hands of a player, who knows the niceſt rules of joining the delicate to the natural; who knows how to add a graceful and decent dignity to the comic ſcene; and has even raiſed more than once the laugh of the pretty gentlemen of the age at their own follies!

The actor who is capable of executing this, ſurely can never be ſuſpected of wanting underſtanding: 'Tis evident that this is beyond the reach of all the qualifications in the world without that director; indeed few of the comic actors, who have made any figure, have been ſuſpected in this particular. It is not the ſame caſe among the performers in tragedy; every one will recollect that ſome who have appeared at leaſt decent in many not contemptible characters in that way, have been violently ſuſpected of a deficiency in this point.

If we would be at the trouble to eſtabliſh a more juſt idea of *Senſe* or *Underſtanding*, than at preſent the world perhaps uſually does; and give ourſelves leave to judge of the ſeveral kinds of it, or the ſeveral forms at leaſt under which it preſents itſelf to our view; we ſhould be more accurate in the determining the characters of our theatrical performers in regard to it. Thoſe among them whom we hear accuſed of wanting

ſenſe, perhaps ought rather to be ſaid to have a different kind of it from that of their accuſers, than abſolutely to be without it. Players who pleaſe in various characters, and yet are cenſured as having very bad underſtandings, have often indeed but little of that ſort of ſenſe, which tho' in certain companies it gives a man the greateſt reputation, yet evidently deſerves the leaſt; of that ſort of ſenſe which is deſtin'd for oſtentation rather than for uſe, and which may be aptly enough compar'd to thoſe kinds of trees, which yield a profuſion of flowers, but bear no fruit: This is a kind of ſenſe which furniſhes us with a bare parade and ſhew, but is of no uſe in any of the occaſions of life. It makes us ſhine in matters of no importance, but every profeſſor of it has found, at one time or other, that it is not of the leaſt aſſiſtance to us in any thing in which it is worth our while to wiſh we may ſucceed.

Perhaps this kind of ſenſe is wanting in thoſe actors, who tho' they are applauded on the ſtage, are ſaid among the criticks to have bad underſtandings; but if it is ſo, nature has given them in recompenſe another ſpecies of it, which exerts itſelf indeed with leſs pomp and ſhew, but which is infinitely more determinate and more uſeful. They have at leaſt underſtandings good enough, to be able to enter into the niceſt and moſt abſtruſe points in their profeſſion: And it is plain they have us'd this penetration to the beſt advantage, as they have by means of it found the way to a laſting applauſe: and if we allow them this, as leſs cannot be allowed, we are no longer to cenſure them as being wanting in point of underſtanding.

Tho'

Tho' this be an inconteſtible truth, experience ſhews us that the tragick actors are continually expoſed to this ſort of cenſure; while ſcarce any man has ventur'd to caſt the ſame reproach at thoſe players who excel in comedy. The reaſon ſeems not founded on any thing in nature; but on what ought to ſhame our critieks out of it, on a fault in their own apprehenſions. Is it not wholly owing to this, that the fineſſe and delicacy of the comic actor is more open, more expoſed to the audience, than that of the performer in tragedy either is, or indeed ought to be? The ſenſe and ſpirit of the actor, as well as of the author, in tragedy, is ordinarily to diſcloſe itſelf only in the dignity and juſtneſs of the ſentiment and expreſſion; and they are not ſo eaſily diſtinguiſhed under this diſguiſe, as where in comic ſcenes they ſhew their naked face, without the ſlighteſt veil, on every occaſion. Nay, in many caſes, the man who is very well able to diſtinguiſh thoſe graces, under the ſhade that a decent propriety throws over them, does not think it eſſential to his entertainment to do ſo. When we go to a tragedy, we expect the heart to be affected rather than the imagination, and the actor naturally loſes half the praiſe of that very merit by which we are affected. But 'tis not ſo in a comedy; we go to that to laugh, we give ourſelves up to every emotion the comedian excites in us, and never concern ourſelves about the means by which he produces them. The great difference, in fine, turns upon this; at a comedy the heart is leſs engaged than at a tragedy, and the audience is conſequently more at leiſure to diſtinguiſh which are the effects produc'd by the art and management of the author,

and which are owing to the addreſs and merit of the performer.

CHAP. II.

Of SENSIBILITY.

Whether this Quality of the Heart be more important to the Performers in Tragedy, *or in* Comedy?

WE almoſt want a word in the *Engliſh* language to expreſs a very eſſential qualification in an actor, and one which more than any other enables him to affect and pleaſe us. The *French*, who eſteem it one of the greateſt requiſites to every player, of whatever kind, call it *Sentiment*, a term that carries much the ſame meaning with the word *Senſibility*, by which we have choſen to expreſs it; and by which we would be underſtood to mean, a diſpoſition to be affected by the paſſions, which are the ſubjects of dramatic writing.

It is evident that different people have this quality of the heart in a very different degree: if we look round among the audience at a Tragedy, we ſhall find people variouſly affected by the ſame words, delivered by the ſame voice, and under the ſame circumſtances; and in the reading, the ſame ſcene in a play ſhall paſs off ſmoothly from the tongue of one perſon, while the diſturbance of the heart of another, as he goes thro' it, ſhall render the organs of his voice incapable of pronouncing the words articulately. The degree

gree of underſtanding is not concern'd in this difference of the effect from the ſame words; the perſon who feels leaſt from them often underſtanding their true meaning, and entering into their beauties perhaps better than the other. 'Tis *Senſibility*, a peculiar quality in the mind, that determines the force of the ſcene; and 'tis evident that this is a quality of more conſequence in playing than in any other profeſſion. In what road of playing it is moſt important, remains to be enquired into.

People who find themſelves naturally of a tender diſpoſition, are apt to believe that they are therefore form'd for playing well in tragedy; and, on the contrary, thoſe who are of a lively, jocund, and ſprightly turn, commonly flatter themſelves that they ſhall therefore be able to ſhine in comedy. It muſt be allowed, that a turn to ſerioufneſs, tenderneſs, and melancholy in the tragedian, and a natural gaiety of temper in the comedian, are two as conſiderable advantages as we could wiſh in them. They are not, however, of that conſequence the poſſeſſors of them are apt to imagine; nay, they are ſo far from alone furniſhing out the player, that, at the very beſt, they make only a part of that qualification which we have here called *ſenſibility*. The ſenſe of this term is very extenſive; it takes in not only the natural turn of mind in the player, but that pliantneſs of diſpoſition by means of which the different paſſions are made eaſily to ſucceed to one another in his ſoul. The heart that enjoys this, in a proper degree, is like ſoft wax, which, under the hands of a judicious artiſt, is capable of becoming, in the ſame minute, a Medea and a Sappho; an eaſy

ductility in the wax is not more requiſite to fit it for the purpoſe of the modeller, than is this *ſenſibility* in the heart of the actor, by means of which it is to receive whatever modifications the writer pleaſes, and that in an eaſy, an unconſtrain'd ſucceſſion. Whoever, on a candid examination of himſelf, finds that he cannot eaſily ſubmit his mind to all theſe changes, let him not think of offering himſelf to the public as a player. The performer, who does not himſelf feel the ſeveral emotions he is to expreſs to the audience, will give but a lifeleſs and inſipid repreſentation of them. All the art in the world can never ſupply the want of *Senſibility* in the player; if he is defective in this eſſential quality, all the advantages of nature, all the accompliſhments he may have acquired by ſtudy, are thrown away upon him; he will never make others feel what he does not feel himſelf, and will always be as different from the thing he is to repreſent, as a maſk from a face.

The being able to ſubject the ſoul to ſucceeding paſſions, tho' they be contrary ones, as is frequently the caſe, is univerſally allowed to be neceſſary, in the higheſt degree, to the tragedian: the common opinion ſeems to judge it leſs eſſential to the comic performer; but, in reality, it is not only equally neceſſary to the laſt, but even more ſo.

The dignity of tragedy does not permit it to repreſent to us any other than great and ſtriking incidents. The actions of the perſons it repreſents are all to be of this kind; and it is therefore reduced to a neceſſity of conſtantly having recourſe to thoſe paſſions which are the moſt proper to produce them.

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The three great resources of these actions are *love*, *hatred*, and *ambition*; and it is in consequence of tragedy's being ty'd down to these narrow bounds, that the principal characters it gives us are tender and passionate lovers, who generally water with their tears the paths by which they are to arrive at the period of their misfortunes; generous avengers of injuries, whose souls are bent to appease the manes of their murder'd fathers, relations, or friends, or to give liberty to their native land, by the death of some murtherer or usurper; or glorious criminals, who tread under foot the most sacred ties to raise themselves to a throne, from which they are afterwards to be thrown down in their turn. Sometimes, indeed, the tragic poet has made a maternal, or a conjugal affection, the subject of his most interesting scenes. The first of these never fails to engage the attention and the hearts of an audience in an uncommon manner; but the same success has not always attended the other.

The affection of an *Andromache* for her son, has never fail'd to draw tears from even the less tender part of an audience. Who ever heard, without this silent, this most sincere applause, Mrs. *Cibber* deliver the maternal affection of the widow of *Hector*, in the natural, the expressive words of

——————my swoll'n heart is full——
I have a thousand farewels for my son,
But tears break in—grief interrupts my speech;
My soul o'erflows in fondness—let him know,
I dy'd to save him, and wou'd die again.
Season his mind with early hints of glory;

Make

Make him acquainted with his anceſtors,
Trace out their ſhining ſtory to his thoughts:
Dwell on th' exploits of his immortal father,
And ſometimes let him hear his mother' name.
Let him reflect upon his royal birth
With modeſt pride: *Pyrrhus* will prove a friend;
But let him know he has a conqueror's right.
He muſt be taught to ſtifle his reſentments,
And ſacrifice his vengeance to his ſafety.
Should he prove headſtrong, raſh, or unadvis'd,
He then will fruſtrate all his mother's virtue,
Provoke his fate, and I ſhall die in vain.

Or thoſe often celebrated, but never too often repeated ones, which cloſe the firſt act.

I'll go, and in the anguiſh of my heart,
Weep o'er my child; if he muſt die, my life
Is wrap'd in his: I ſhall not long ſurvive.
'Tis for his ſake that I have ſuffer'd life,
Groan'd in captivity, and out-liv'd *Hector*.
Yes, my *Aſtyanax*, we'll go together;
Together to the realms of night we'll go.
There to thy raviſh'd eyes thy ſire I'll ſhew,
And point him out among the ſhades below.

It may not be amiſs to obſerve, in regard to theſe laſt lines, a thing which will however be treated of more at large hereafter; *viz.* that it is often neceſſary for the actor to ſacrifice the meaſure of the verſe to the ſenſe. The three firſt lines of this laſt quotation, perhaps, never were ſpoke without commanding the tears of the audience, except by Mrs. *Roberts*; but ſhe, tho' in the whole, far from a deſpicable player, always deſtroyed the force of them by keeping ſo

rigidly

rigidly to the meaſure as to make ſome ſort of pauſe at the end of each line, tho' the ſenſe evidently runs into the ſucceeding ones.

After recollecting the conſtant effect of this maternal affection on the audience, let us compare with it that of the conjugal love, expreſs'd in no inferior manner, and in a no leſs favourite play, in the character of *Belvidera*, in the *Venice Preſerv'd* of *Otway*. Perhaps this honeſt and noble paſſion has never been touch'd in a more maſterly manner than in that ſpeech of this lady; where, after her huſband's repreſenting to her the miſerable condition they ſhould ſhortly be reduc'd to, ſhe anſwers,

O, I will love thee, even in madneſs love thee;
Tho' my diſtracted ſenſes ſhou'd forſake me,
I'd find ſome intervals, when my poor heart
Shou'd 'ſwage itſelf, and be let looſe to thine:
Tho' the bare earth be all our reſting-place,
Its roots our food, ſome cliff our habitation;
I'll make this arm a pillow for thine head,
And as thou ſighing ly'ſt, and ſwell'd with ſorrow,
Creep to thy boſom, pour the balm of love
Into thy ſoul, and kiſs thee to thy reſt;
Then praiſe our God, and watch thee till the morning.

We have a fair compariſon in theſe almoſt inimitable paſſages, both ſpoken by the ſame inimitable actreſs, between the effects of one of theſe paſſions and the other; and the caſe is ſoon decided, when we perceive, that tho' a whole audience feels the firſt, no tears are ever ſhed for the laſt, except by a few ladies who have not been long married. If we would aſk the reaſon

for

for this partiality in regard to the poet and the performer, tho' both equally great in each caſe, perhaps it is that the former is more in nature, and that there are more affectionate mothers than affectionate wives among us.

Tragedy not only takes in but few paſſions, but all that it does employ, bear a ſort of natural conformity to one another; they are all violent, and all ſerious ones; its heroes are always either in the moſt vehement tranſports, or in the deepeſt melancholy. Some of them are, thro' the whole play, furious, raging, and thirſting as it were for blood; others are continually bent down beneath the weight of their own misfortunes, or of thoſe of ſome other perſon who is dear to them: both are continually agitated by rage, or by affliction; by an impatience to ſee their intents accompliſh'd; or by a deſpair on ſeeing the execution of them retarded by ſome powerful obſtacles. If the poet ſuſpends for a few moments the rage, or the miſery of his principal characters, to relieve for a time the audience and the player, it is generally done with deſign to engage them immediately afterwards in ſcenes yet more affecting than thoſe out of which he has for the preſent reliev'd them. A few only of the paſſions, for theſe reaſons, fall to the ſhare of the tragedian; the comic player, on the other hand, has the whole ſeries of them within his province; and he will be eſteem'd a man of no conſequence in his profeſſion, if he cannot, with equal ſtrength and propriety, expreſs the tranſports of a fond and fooliſh joy, and thoſe of the moſt excruciating uneaſineſs; the ridiculous doating of an old and impotent lover, and the ſuſpicious reſentments of a jealous huſband, or inſulted rival; the noble

boldneſs

boldneſs of a daring, generous mind; and the contemptible timidity of a puſillanimous heart: if he cannot repreſent to us with the ſame ſtrength and ſpirit, a ſtupid admiration, and an inſolent diſdain; all the extravagances of the moſt intereſted ſelf-love, when flatter'd with circumſtances that favour it, or hurt by contrary accidents: In fine, if he be not able to give a due force to every emotion of the heart; to every ſpecies of paſſion that human nature is capable of being affected by.

It is not ſufficient for him that he be able to put on the image of every one of the paſſions that fall within the reach of his author, if he have not, beſide this, the power of throwing himſelf readily and eaſily out of one into another of them. The buſineſs of comedy is to raiſe and to keep up a pleaſurable ſenſation, to give joy to an audience; and the poets who excel in this ſpecies of writing, well knowing that a dull uniformity in the ſcene is one of the greateſt enemies to this, have ever been attentive to the neceſſary variety; and taken care to make every capital character in the ſame piece, and not unfrequently in the ſame ſcene, the ſport of a number of different paſſions; they have always given it an infinity of contrary impreſſions, the one of which ſuddenly drives away another, to be, in its turn, as ſuddenly baniſhed by a third.

Mr. *Garrick*, who is as amiable in the character of a player, as cenſurable in another capacity in which he has too much connexion with our theatrical entertainments, gives us an excellent inſtance of what perfection an actor may arrive at in this way, in his *Archer*: in this, tho' not one

of

of the characters in which he makes the greateſt figure, how readily does he run through the ſeveral artful tranſitions which the author of the *Stratagem* has thrown into his character, from one paſſion to another, moſt foreign, nay, ſometimes, moſt oppoſite ones! and how wholly does he devote himſelf to each in its turn, as if no other, of whatever kind, had ever claimed any power over him!

In one ſcene he is the ardent lover, in another the mercenary ſchemer: in one, the jovial footman treating his fellow ſlave with all the ready familiarity of an equal, in another, the gallant courting in high heroics: in one ſcene, nay in one moment, the free companion, and the humble attendant of *Aimwell*, or the reſolute heroe in the engagement with a ruffian, and the bantering acquaintance with the lady.

Till this excellent performer play'd this part, we never knew what beauties it was capable of, in the ſudden tranſitions from paſſion to paſſion, in the laſt act; where he alternately rejoices in the ſucceſs of the ſcheme he was upon; and becomes the ſurly accuſer of the friend who had partnerſhip in it, and whom an inſtant before he was hugging in his arms; then conceives new hopes from promiſing circumſtances, which fail his expectation, and return him to his deſpair. In fine, his exquiſite mixture of paſſions, at the ſame inſtant in the dread of a diſcovery from an old acquaintance, his tranſport in immediately afterwards finding this very perſon the meſſenger of better news than could have been expected; his paſſion for Mrs. *Sullen* and his dear *Cherry* at the ſame time; his concern at the ſuppoſed loſs of that good-natur'd creature, and the joy at receiving

ceiving news both of her and his money at once: all this, notwithſtanding all that has been ſaid of Mr. *Wilks*, never was ſo expreſs'd as to intereſt the audience in every one of the ſeveral paſſions together; or but to convey all of them to them, till we ſaw Mr. *Garrick* in the character.

We have a multitude of inſtances of this kind in our other comedies, where the actor always fails, and the author is cenſured by moſt people as dull in the moſt ſpirited parts of his piece. The French ſtage gives us infinitely greater inſtances of this tranſition from paſſion to paſſion in comedy than ours; and to do juſtice to the performers of that nation, it affords us alſo very numerous inſtances of actors who are able to play them.

The character of *Arnolphe*, in the *Ecole des Femmes*, is an eminent inſtance of this, and may ſerve as a leſſon to the player, of whatever nation, to inſtruct him in every thing that is neceſſary in this way. This character, in the courſe of a very few moments, is carried through all the contraſts which could produce in him the utmoſt curioſity to know every thing that related to the ſucceſs of his amour, and the dread of his finding that he was betray'd: he laments that he is ſo far diſtant from the object of his affection, and that at ſo very improper a time; and at the ſame moment rejoices that he is certain of not being quite ſo miſerable as he had the moment before perſuaded himſelf that he was. When *Agnes* ingenuouſly acknowledges to him, that ſhe cannot love him, to what a variety of different emotions does the jealous lover give himſelf up, deſpairing to gain her either by threats or perſuaſions; and what a variety of oppoſite paſſions does he expreſs

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on that occaſion! What an oppoſition is ſeen in him of averſion and tenderneſs; of rage and ſoftneſs; of tyrannic fiereeneſs, and of ſlaviſh humility; what terrible projects of revenge, and what gallant reſolutions of forgetting every thing.

Whoever has ſeen the performer who now plays *Arnolphe* at *Paris*, will not blame us for going ſo far for an inſtance of a perfection in this article, which we cannot flatter ourſelves (notwithſtanding all the merit we have been ſo juſt to in Mr. *Garrick*) ſo far as to pretend is found at home.

If in playing comedy it is neceſſary that the player be able to make the moſt different impreſſions ſucceed one another readily and eaſily in his heart, it is not leſs eſſential to the performer in tragedy that he feel, much more ſtrongly than the other needs to do, every one of thoſe which he is to expreſs to the audience. *Senſibility* in the comic actor, therefore, muſt be a more univerſal agent, and in the tragedian it muſt be a more powerful one: it muſt be capable of exerting itſelf in a ſtronger manner within its due bounds, and of producing greater effects. The comedian needs only to have a ſoul equal to that of the generality of men; but the player, who thinks to excel in tragedy, muſt have one above the common rank.

'Tis from our being in ſome degree ſenſible of this, that we are leſs ready to pardon the comedian, if he does not expreſs, under every circumſtance, the juſt and requiſite degree, as well as the juſt ſpecies of paſſion that he is to deſcribe to us. We are not in a condition to judge, with exactneſs, of the performance of the tragedian; we want the neceſſary realities to make the compariſon, by which we ſhould be able to determine whether

whether he comes up to his duty in the part; but we are never under this uncertainty in judging of the comedians; we never want the objects of compariſon for them; but at any time, if we will only examine what would paſs within our own hearts, ſuppoſing we were in the ſame ſituation in which the author has placed the character they are repreſenting, we ſhall be able to decide whether they are accurate and faithful copies.

It will perhaps be reply'd to us, "This laſt propoſition cannot indeed be diſputed; but is "that which eſtabliſhes a neceſſity of this *ſenſibility* to all the performers on the ſtage, equally "inconteſtable? You have eſtabliſhed it as a "firſt principle, that no player can expreſs a "paſſion perfectly on the ſtage, if he do not feel "it deeply himſelf. But how will you be able "to perſuade the world that ſome of our actreſſes, "who ſhall be nameleſs, who are ſo perfect "in the art of feigning in private paſſions, which "they in reality feel nothing of, may not carry "the ſame artifice to the ſtage, and diſſemble "as well with us there? Or how ſhall we be "convinc'd, that women who are ſo able to "feign things to their lovers, are incapable of "counterfeiting with the ſpectators, or of deſcribing, expreſſively enough to them, paſſions "which themſelves have never felt?"

The objection is plauſible; but it is eaſily anſwer'd. We are not to be ſurpris'd if women ſucceed better in deceiving eyes predetermin'd to be favourable to them, than they can in diſguiſing their hearts to perſons who are free from this prejudice, and whoſe whole attention, in regard to them, is employ'd in examining their actions in a critical and unbiaſs'd manner, and

that with a conſiderable ſhare of curioſity and inſpection. The ſelf-love of the gallant is always a very faithful friend to the miſtreſs; but that of the ſpectator has no ſuch influence in regard to the actreſs: the vanity of the firſt leads him to imagine, that he ſees the lady what ſhe is not; and the diſcernment of the other teaches him to ſuſpect that he does not ſee her what ſhe ought to be: the one finds a pleaſure in ſuffering himſelf to be cheated, the other taſtes a greater, in ſhewing that he is not a dupe to the repreſentation, when the artifice is too groſs to deceive: he is very willing, in caſes of this kind, to be impos'd on; but he would have his error carry with it, at leaſt, a face of probability.

The miſtreſs and the actreſs have only this in common, that it is the more eaſy to them to affect a paſſion, as they are leſs under the influence of its oppoſite one. From this principle it follows, that the actreſs cannot be too careful to prevent the common accidents of life, whether good or bad ones, from making any great impreſſions on her heart. If ſhe ſuffers herſelf to be affected too violently with pleaſure or concern, on account of her more trivial, domeſtick affairs, ſhe will ſcarce ever be in a condition to let the paſſions of the character ſhe is to repreſent take place ſufficiently in her heart, or affect her deeply enough to make it poſſible for her to affect the audience. She will find it a difficulty too great to ſtruggle againſt, to diſplace, juſt at her pleaſure, the paſſions that have perſonally affected her, to appropriate, with any degree of ſucceſs, thoſe peculiar to the character ſhe is to aſſume.

The laſt ſeaſon gave us a very ſtrong inſtance of this truth in a new actreſs, Miſs *B—y*.

The

The firſt night this actreſs appear'd, we ſaw in her a good figure, a deportment that promis'd, after ſome time and practice, to be not deſpicable, and a perfect attention to every incident of her part. It was with conſiderable pleaſure that we expected to ſee her improve upon us the next night; but we were diſappointed: every look was wild and ſtaring; and, excepting the awkward ſtiffneſs that had been the principal blemiſh which diſguſted us the night before, nothing remain'd the ſame about her. She ſeem'd to forget every particular ſhe ought to have remember'd, except the words; and thoſe ſhe repeated, in many places, in ſo heedleſs a manner, that it was evident ſhe was thinking of ſomething elſe all the while. In ſhort, her ſucceſs had, in one ſenſe, been much greater the firſt night than ſhe had expected. If ſhe had, as an actreſs, found fewer admirers than her vanity had flatter'd her into a belief ſhe ſhould, ſhe had made more lovers than ſhe well knew what to do with; and, from that time, the hurry of her paſſions, independent of the theatre, render'd it impoſſible for her to attend to thoſe which belonged to it; and ſhe, conſequently, became the moſt flat, inſipid, ſtalking, ſtaring thing that ever appeared there; 'till to our great good fortune, as well as hers, we loſt her.

People of a diſcerning judgment have found it eaſy to diſcover the ſame occaſional interruptions in Mrs. *Woffington*'s playing; and when her mind has been unſettled, have very evidently diſcern'd a want of attention to the buſineſs of the ſcene: perhaps it is more owing than we imagine to an uncommonly ſettled and tranquil ſtate at home, that this lady has for the laſt year or two ſucceeded ſo well in every thing. It is notorious

of the late Mrs. *Oldfield*, that nothing ruffled her temper; it was for this reaſon that it was always ready to throw itſelf into every paſſion the author pleas'd; and it is not leſs certain, that the greateſt actreſs of the preſent age owes no ſmall ſhare of her ſucceſs to a natural philoſophic turn of mind, which nothing is able to diſcompoſe.

CHAP. III.

Whether an Actor can have too much Fire?

THERE are ſome modern performers, who, in ſcenes where it is required they ſhould be violently affected, are under a neceſſity of putting off an artificial warmth upon us, in the place of that native fire and ſpirit, that Promethean heat which they find nature has left them deficient in; and we are unhappy enough to have another ſet of them, the weakneſs of whoſe conſtitutions, the natural imbecility of whoſe organs will not permit them even to uſe this reſource. We have had many modern inſtances among theſe laſt ſort of people, who finding they were not able to cheat our ſenſes, have modeſtly attempted to impoſe upon our underſtandings: they very ſeriouſly, and, as they would have it be thought, very wiſely tell us, that the fire which the mob is ſo charm'd with, in ſome of their cotemporaries, is much more frequently a fault in players than a perfection.

The firſt ſet are a ſort of coiners of falſe money, who would paſs copper upon us for gold; the others a ſet of fools, who attempt to perſuade us, that the ſpangles of hoar froſts covering

vering the leafleſs branches of our trees, are the greateſt beauties of nature; becauſe it is their fortune to inhabit a country which is buried in ſnow the greateſt part of the year.

A Player of *Drury-Lane*, who is not without his merit when properly employ'd; who has good ſenſe, a ſound judgment, and many other of the requiſites for the ſtage; but who remarkably wants this native fire about him, gives us a very eminent inſtance of the firſt kind, in the character of *Priuli*.

The poet, who has introduced this character in the midſt of a high reſentment, kindled upon a natural enough, tho' unjuſt cauſe, doubtleſs intended to ſhew him to us in all the tranſports of rage and indignation for the loſs of a daughter whom he dearly loved, and who had been ſtolen from him by a man whom he hated. Let us imagine Mr. *Garrick* under theſe circumſtances: let us recollect the provok'd old man in King *Lear*; and when we remember from that, what ought to be the ſpirited indignation of *Priuli* againſt *Jaffeir*, we ſhall ſee a very ſtrong inſtance of the impropriety of forcing into this character a man who muſt be violent in ſpite of nature; and who, when he has conjur'd up all the powers of his ſoul, can give us only noiſy, empty ſound, inſtead of that heart-felt anguiſh, heightened into rage by the preſence of the offending perſon, with which the exaſperated old man thus utters his curſes.

May all your joys in her prove falſe like mine.
A ſteril fortune, and a barren bed
Attend you both: continual diſcord make
Your days and nights bitter and grievous ſtill:

May the hard hand of a vexatious need
Oppreſs and grind you; 'till at laſt you find
The curſe of diſobedience all your portion.

And afterwards, when the child of his once lov'd daughter is mention'd with an intent to ſooth him, adds:

Let it live
To bait thee for its bread, and din thine ears
With hungry cries, while its unhappy mother
Sits down and weeps in bitterneſs and want.

It is eaſy to ſee that the performer we are mentioning is, in this particular part, what has been much too ſeverely ſaid of him in all, a player in ſpite of nature. There are many characters in which warmth and violence have no ſhare; in theſe an actor, of this naturally ſedate turn, is cut out to excel: but the forcing him into a part where things are requir'd which are not in him, is unfair, nay 'tis unjuſt both to himſelf and thoſe who do it. If we would recollect, by way of contraſt to the labour'd violence, the artificial heat with which theſe paſſages are deliver'd by this actor, the true ſpirit, the native fire with which a provok'd old man ought to deliver himſelf, let us look to the player we have juſt mention'd, Mr. *Garrick*, in King *Lear*, at the concluſion of the ſecond act, where, urg'd by the ingratitude and baſeneſs of thoſe whom he had rais'd to power, he cries out,

Heavens, drop your patience down!
Ye ſee me here, ye gods, a poor old man,
As full of grief as age: wretched in both——

I'll

I'll hear no more; no—ye unnatural hags,
I will have ſuch revenges on you both,
That all the world ſhall—I will do ſuch things;
What they are yet I know not; but they ſhall be
The terrors of the earth—You think I'll weep;
This heart ſhall break into a thouſand pieces
Before I'll weep.—O, gods, I ſhall be mad!—

Perhaps nobody but *Shakeſpear* could have well drawn a character in ſo ſtrong a ſcene of rage and vehemence; certainly no man, except the gentleman we have juſt mentioned in the character, ever did, or ever could do him juſtice in the expreſſing it. The whole compaſs of the ſtage will not afford us ſo high a contraſt of the true and the falſe fire, the native and the artificial violence we have been ſpeaking of, as we ſee in theſe; therefore more ſpecimens of this defect are needleſs.

If we would proceed to enquire after inſtances of the other; where the native inactivity of an actor's ſoul would cheat us into a belief that it has merit in it; and by a formal, dull, and cold recital, made in ſounding ſolemn accents, perſuade us, that the dignity of tragedy is beſt kept up by this ſleepy virtue; let us recollect the man who, about a twelvemonth ſince, play'd a part in which we have been us'd to ſee a performer, more eminent for force than for vivacity, ſhine to great advantage; we mean *Horatio* in the *Fair Penitent*. When we have called to mind the true ſpirit, the noble, the diſdainful anger with which Mr. *Quin* addreſſes *Lothario* in their quarrel, let us remember the philoſophic ſpirit, and cool blood with which this gentleman ſpoke

'Tis well you are—the man who wrongs my friend,
To the earth's utmoſt verge wou'd I purſue;
No place, tho' ere ſo holy, ſhou'd protect him;
No ſhape that artful fear ere found ſhould hide him,
Till he fair anſwer made, and did me juſtice.

We ſhall then be perfectly convinc'd of the abſurdity of the doctrine theſe people have ſet on foot to ſcreen their own imperfections, and be able to judge how much truth there is in the aſſertion, that *ſpirit and fire are always blameable in grave characters.*

This is a tenet ſtrongly maintain'd indeed by this inſipid ſet of players; but they are to know, that no character has any buſineſs in tragedy that is ſo very philoſophic as to be out of the reach of all paſſions; that the whole ſeries of our dramatic writings does not furniſh us with one inſtance of a good play in which there is ſuch a part; and we may add, that the player, if he has any of the native fire in him which is ſo eſſential to his profeſſion, can never ſhew it to ſo much advantage as when the character he performs is naturally ſedate; but is forc'd, by injuries too great to bear, to riſe into all the violence of rage.

If it be neceſſary to ſtrengthen the evidence we have given, of the abſurdity of this tame playing in characters where the paſſions dictate otherwiſe, let us call to mind the ſweet, unpaſſion'd gentleman who ſhewed himſelf firſt to us, two or three years ago, in the character of *Hotſpur*. This player was one of the phlegmatic rank, and had convinc'd himſelf, by what he had heard from that great enemy to unneceſſary vehemence, *Macklin*, that the higheſt merit of playing was openly

openly in his way, if he only purſued his natural coolneſs. It was not eaſy for a perſon, ſo nearly concern'd as this gentleman, to diſtinguiſh between a judicious and an unnatural ſuppreſſion of the ſigns of rage in the leſſons that excellent inſtructor deliver'd in his lectures; and in conſequence of his firm perſuaſion that every thing was right that was not violent, he told his audience, with all the temper of a philoſopher,

By heaven, methinks it were an eaſy leap
To pluck bright honour from the pale-fac'd moon,
Or drag up drowned honour by the locks.

Let us not be dupes to the artifices of the firſt of theſe ſort of players, nor to the ſophiſms of the latter: let us not always take the exclamations, or the contorſions of an actor of the firſt kind for fire, nor the ice of the latter for prudence. Far from imitating ſome of the modern frequenters of the theatre, who are continually preaching it up to the young actors, whoſe ſucceſs they intereſt themſelves in, that they are of all things to moderate their fire; let us pronounce it as a general rule to every perſon who attempts to ſhine upon the ſtage, that he cannot have too much of this enlivening ſpirit; that multitudes of players have the ill luck to diſpleaſe their audiences, only becauſe nature has deny'd them this great, this intereſting requiſite; or, which comes to much the ſame end, becauſe their timidity, or ſheepiſh baſhfulneſs has prevented them from making uſe of what they have of it; and that, on the other hand, many of our actors, who at preſent meet with a frequent applauſe, would eſtabliſh themſelves a reputation much more general, and leſs liable

liable to be conteſted, if they were more animated with this invigorating flame, which, as it were, gives life to the repreſentations of the ſtage.

We remember when Mrs. *Elmy*, an actreſs of great judgment, endowed with a ſweet voice and a pleaſing deportment, obtain'd a merited applauſe in the Character of *Lavinia* in the *Fair Penitent*; ſo great, that it ſtartled the *Caliſta* in the ſame play; and had *Caliſta* been any body but Mrs. *Cibber*, would unqueſtionably have made *Lavinia* the firſt character in the performance for that night.

The ſweetneſs of diſpoſition, tenderneſs, affection, and fidelity of that part ſuited extremely well with the peculiar turn of this actreſs; they gave her room to ſhew all her perfections, and gave us no opportunity to ſee her defects; we were charm'd with her; nay, many were in doubt whether they ſhould declare her the ſecond, or the firſt actreſs of the preſent ſtage. Full of the ſucceſs of this, ſhe appeared again in her other characters afterwards; but we then not only found her of ſomewhat leſs merit than we had before eſteemed her, but we diſcovered too the defect which kept down all her other perfections. We name this to the lady not by way of cenſure or reproach, but to tell her, in honeſt friendſhip, the only thing ſhe wants, in order to her being as great in every character, as ſhe was in that of *Lavinia*. The one thing wanting in her is, that Promethean heat, that fire we have been juſt now ſpeaking the praiſes of. How far ſhe can attain this, by practice, ſhe herſelf will beſt judge, when ſhe examines her own heart, and finds whether nature has left her deficient in it, or whether it is only a falſe modeſty that prevents her uſing it.

How

How fine a figure did this judicious ſpeaker make in ſome parts of the character of *the Lady in Comus*; but how cold, how (not to ſpare the word) contemptible did her want of fire make her appear, when, with little more heat than we have juſt mentioned in the memorable *Hotſpur*, ſhe ſaid to the god who was courting her by arguments againſt virtue and chaſtity,

——to him who dares
Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words
Againſt the ſun-clad power of chaſtity,
Fain wou'd I ſomething ſay:—yet to what purpoſe.
Thou haſt not ear nor ſoul to apprehend;
And thou art worthy that thou ſhou'dſt not know
More happineſs than this thy preſent lot;
Thou art not fit to hear thyſelf convinc'd.
Yet ſhould I try, the uncontroled worth
Of this pure cauſe wou'd kindle my rapt ſpirits
To ſuch a flame of ſacred vehemence,
That dumb things wou'd be mov'd to ſympathize,
And the brute earth wou'd lend her nerves, and ſhake
Till all thy magic ſtructures, rear'd ſo high,
Were ſhatter'd into heaps o'er thy falſe head.

It is eaſy to conceive what tranſport and vehemence the poet intended ſhould accompany theſe words, by the uncommon ſtrength he has given them; and we may imagine how ſtrongly he intended an audience ſhould be affected by them, when he introduces the immortal being to whom they were addreſs'd; to uſe his own words, trembling with terror as he hears them.

As when the wrath of Jove
Speaks thunder, and the chains of Erebus,
To ſome of Satan's crew.

'Tis impoſſible for words of ſo much force to be heard without being admired; but we appeal to the audience, whether that admiration was not all that was felt when this lady ſpoke them! We loſt the terror that ſhould have accompanied ſo bold, ſo nobly daring a ſpeech; and, in fine, we admired the poet, while we forgot the actreſs.

The propoſitions we have deliver'd in this chapter will never be call'd in queſtion by any one who knows how to avoid the common error of confounding the vehemence of declamation with true and genuine ſpirit, or who will properly reflect on the nature of that quality, and by this means find, that this fire, which we are celebrating in the player, is nothing more than a juſt rapidity of thought, and vivacity of diſpoſition, in concurrence with which only it is, that all the other qualities that conſtitute him a good one, are happy in giving the marks of reality to his performance.

When this principle is eſtabliſh'd, it is eaſy to conclude from it, that an actor can never have too much fire; ſince it is impoſſible that the repreſentation of his character can ever have too much the air of a reality: and, conſequently, that the impreſſion on his mind can never be too ready or too lively; nor can the expreſſion of it anſwer too ſuddenly, or too faithfully to the impulſe he receives from it.

A performer will, indeed, be very ſeverely cenſur'd, and very juſtly too, if his playing be not in all reſpects

reſpects conſonant with, and perfectly agreeable to the character and circumſtances of the perſon he repreſents; or if, under the intent of manifeſting his fire, he only exhibits a ſet of convulſive geſtures, or roars out a parcel of inadequate exclamations. But, in this caſe, the people of taſte and judgment will not accuſe him of having too much fire, but too little underſtanding; they will even complain, under theſe very circumſtances, of his wanting fire; and he will find himſelf under the ſame ſort of cenſure with certain modern books, which the vulgar accuſe of having too much wit in them, but which theſe ſort of judges condemn for having no wit at all!

There is not, perhaps, a ſcene on the modern ſtage in which an actor is required to feel more, or to expreſs himſelf with greater force and real fire, than that of *Caſſio*, in *Othello*, after the miſchiefs of his drunken fit. An honeſt, brave, good-natur'd man is, in this play, ſeduced by a villain to drink, with intent to breed a quarrel; he gets drunk, he quarrels, he behaves very ill, and his ſuperior officer coming in, he is broke for it upon the ſpot. Rage here takes the place of drunkenneſs, and too much fire cannot ſhew itſelf in his expreſſion of that rage; but we find that a falſe fire may eaſily be thrown into it. What can be more natural, more beautiful, than the expreſſions the inimitable author of this play throws into his mouth upon this occaſion.

Reputation! reputation!—I have loſt my reputation—I have loſt the immortal part of myſelf, and all that remain is beſtial—my reputation!—O thou invincible ſpirit of wine, if thou haſt no name to be known by, let us call thee

Devil——O that men ſhou'd put an enemy into their mouths to ſteal away their brains—— To be now a ſenſible man, by and by a fool, and preſently a beaſt——Every inordinate cup is unbleſs'd and the ingredient is a devil.

What infinite room is there in theſe broken ſentences, for an actor who has the true fire of his profeſſion in him, to get himſelf applauſe! Yet ſo it has happen'd that in our time, nothing has been made of it: We have had no tolerable Caſſio in my remembrance; and theſe inimitable paſſages have either been pronounc'd with all the drawling ſedateneſs of a philoſopher; or bawl'd out with noiſe inſtead of vehemence; with madneſs inſtead of fire, and accompany'd with geſtures only reconcileable to an imagination of the players being drunk in earneſt.

An author in the diſtribution of what he calls the good things in a comedy, throws a delicacy of ſentiment and a polite wit into the character of a footman, or a chambermaid; or puts madrigals and epigrams into the mouth of an actor, agitated by ſome of the moſt violent paſſions; and the vulgar give him for this the credit of having too much wit: It wou'd be more juſt to determine of him that he had too little judgment, and was but very poorly qualify'd in that moſt material of all the requiſites of an author for the ſtage, the imitation of real life; let us not call the one of theſe abſurdities wit, or the other playing with fire.

We may add that many an actor in performing a favourite part, gives himſelf up to an extravagance of paſſion in places where the ſenſe of the author, and circumſtances of the character

racter he repreſents require no ſuch thing; or if his vehemence be not quite out of place, it is often of a very abſurd kind. Theſe are faults which a man falls into, not thro' an exceſs of fire, as the vulgar ſuppoſe, but thro' a defect of it. He does not perceive that he is exerting his utmoſt efforts to expreſs a paſſion which he is not to feel; and in conſequence of that blunder he does not feel what he ought; and therefore 'tis impoſſible he ſhould expreſs it. In this caſe the actor greatly miſinforms himſelf if he thinks it is fire that he perceives in his temper; it is rather a madneſs, an abſurdity, and as ſuch the more judicious of the audience will be ſure to look on it.

Perhaps it will yet remain the opinion of ſome, that tho' an extravagant action or a miſplaced rant, do not deſerve the name of an exceſs of fire; yet in many characters, even where the player is not blameable in either of theſe points, he may too freely give himſelf up to the ardour of his diſpoſition, and be carried away into faults by it.

Under the ſpecious pretence that every actor ought to tye himſelf down to a certain and regular gradation in his playing, there may be ſome who will object that the warmth of theatrical action ought only to diſcloſe itſelf ſucceſſively; and that if the player, at the firſt inſtant of his entering into a paſſionate part, throws into it all that fire which he ought to have expreſſed at ſome period afterwards, it will be juſt to reproach him with having too much fire, in that firſt inſtant.

There is more of ſhew than of ſolidity in this argument; and it is indeed already anſwered by

the diſtinction which we have eſtabliſhed between the vehemence of action, and the true fire of the actor. The beſt judges indeed often wiſh to ſee the player raiſing himſelf into the moſt violent emotions only by regular degrees, but they wou'd notwithſtanding have his fire be always equal. Nature knows no gradations in the riſe of this enlivening ſpirit; nor do they expect to find any on the ſtage, where every man who knows what he ought to be pleas'd with, likes to ſee the readineſs of conception and vivacity of expreſſion always at their utmoſt height.

The actreſs who has tenderneſs and ſenſibility in her nature, and who eaſily and readily feels every paſſion that the author intends ſhe ſhou'd deſcribe, is not for that reaſon to flatter herſelf that ſhe may excel in the profeſſion without fire. To feel the paſſions we are to point out to others, is certainly a neceſſary firſt ſtep to perfection in playing; but it is not all that is expected of the performer, they may even be exquiſitely felt, and yet for want of this fire they may be but very ill expreſſed. The feeling them ſtrongly may indeed be alone ſufficient for the affecting a few particular perſons; but when a numerous audience is to be mov'd in the ſtrongeſt and moſt pathetic manner, much more is requir'd.

In this caſe there is a neceſſity not only for a due portion of fire, but even of vehemence. Both theſe are as requiſite here, to the affecting the audience, as agitation of the air is to flame. A fire may be ſufficient to warm, nay to burn the neighbouring objects, while it ſmothers within its bounds; but it will never take place upon more diſtant things, unleſs

it

it have the aſſiſtance of a ſtrong mind to promote and carry on its ravages.

The player, who wants feeling, will never be allow'd by thoſe who are judges to be a good one, tho' he may be acknowledged to have the declamatory talents of ſome of our beſt orators; and even he who does not want this great qualification, but who, tho' he has it, wants fire to give it force and luſtre, and who cannot be vehement, when the circumſtances of the character he repreſents require it, will always find his reputation as inferior to that of the performer, who is able to add to the ſame ſenſibility, the force of that warmth and energy we have been celebrating, as the ſucceſs of that orator, whoſe elocution does not come up to the merits of his reaſoning, will be to that of him in whom the auditors find both thoſe advantages united and acting on them together.

We are ready to believe that Mr. *Berry* in the character of *Scioto*, actually feels the ſhock the author repreſents him under, when his daughter is prov'd to be a proſtitute: It ought to be allow'd him, that we even ſee in his countenance the anguiſh, rage and deſpair, which the author meant to deſcribe in that affecting circumſtance; but when he ſpeaks,

It is enough, but I am ſlow to execute
And juſtice lingers in my lazy hand——
Thus let me wipe diſhonour from my name,
And cut thee from the earth, thou ſtain to goodneſs.

Or when he afterwards, with eyes big with real tears, ſays to *Altamont*,

Haſt

Haſt thou not read what brave *Virginius* did;
With his own hand, he ſlew his only daughter
To ſave her from the fierce Decemvir's luſt,
He ſlew her, yet unſpotted, to prevent
The ſhame that he might know —— Then what
ſhou'd I do?
But thou haſt ty'd my hand. I will not kill her,
But by the ruin ſhe has brought upon us,
The common infamy that brands us both,
She ſhall not 'ſcape.

When this player, we wou'd obſerve, pronounces theſe lines, we cannot but acknowledge from his countenance, that he feels the meaning of them ſtrongly; but we find he is very little able to give expreſſion to that feeling. Let us compare this with the rage and anguiſh of a father, in the before quoted King *Lear*, and remember how they diſcover themſelves in the voice, as well as countenance of Mr. *Garrick* when he plays that character, and we ſhall ſee the truth of what we have obſerved as to the ſuperiority of the joint powers of ſenſibility and elevation above that of feeling alone in its ſtrongeſt light. With what a heartfelt anguiſh does he burn at the ingratitude of his child, and with what amazing force does he convey his inmoſt ſentiments on it to us, when he cries out,

—— Hear nature!
Dear goddeſs, hear! and if thou doſt intend
To make that creature fruitful, change thy purpoſe,
Pronounce upon her womb the barren curſe,
That from her blaſted body never ſpring
A child to honour her—but if ſhe muſt bring forth,
Defeat her joy with ſome diſtorted birth,

Or

Or monſtrous form, the prodigy o'the time,
And ſo perverſe of ſpirit, that it may live
Her torment, as 'twas born; to fret her cheeks
With conſtant tears, and wrinkle her young brow,
Turn all her mother's pains to ſhame and ſcorn,
That ſhe may curſe her crime too late, and feel
How ſharper than a ſerpent's tooth it is
To have a thankleſs child.——

We wou'd not be underſtood, even in this eminent view of the ſuperiority on the ſide of the player, who has both feeling and elocution, to mean that he who has only one of them, is uſeleſs in a theatre. We have (thanks to our poets of later times) ſcenes in which a man who has nothing but a declamatory voice without feeling, nay almoſt without meaning, may acquit himſelf well enough: And *Shakeſpear*'s ſelf has given us many inſtances, in which the other quality ſenſibility alone will do; in which power of voice or propriety of figure are not wanting, but if the player have only feeling in himſelf, he will make every body elſe feel with him ſufficiently. The character of the old ſervant *Adam*, in *As you like it*, is of this kind: And had not good fortune rather than judgment thrown it into the manager's way, to give this part to the abovementioned Mr. *Berry*, perhaps neither they or we had ever known, that in his proper way he is one of the beſt players of the time.

When we ſee that honeſt veteran come upon the ſtage, his low condition, and his venerable looks, give us no room to expect elocution from him; all that we require in a character like this, is nature; and its utmoſt merit is the being

ſtrongly

ſtrongly felt by the performer. We did not know how ſtrongly it was poſſible for us to be affected, only by ſeeing that an actor was ſo, till this perſon entering with his young maſter, warn'd him from the houſe of his treacherous and tyrannic brother; told him the danger of being too meritorious in ſuch a place of wickedneſs; and added,

Your virtues, gentle maſter,
Are ſanctify'd and holy traitors to you.
O what a world is this, when what is comely
Envenoms him that bears it,
O unhappy youth,
Come not within theſe doors, this is no place for you,
This houſe is but a butchery
Abhor it, fear it, do not enter it.

The poet has with great art introduc'd the old man's reaſon for loving this his young maſter preferably to the elder and richer ſon, by making him call him *the Memory of old ſir Rowland*. We are ſtrongly affected by the honeſty and friendſhip of this venerable ſervant, as he delivers to him without much ornament the cautions above mention'd; but how are our hearts ſtruck within us, when to the deſpair of his young maſter, on the thought of his flying to miſery and want from the tyranny of his cruel brother, he anſwers,

I have five hundred crowns,
The thriſty hire I ſav'd under your father,
Which I did ſtore to be my foſter nurſe
When ſervice ſhould in my old limbs lie lame,
And unregarded age in holes be thrown.

Take

Take that, and he that doth the ravens feed,
Yea providently caters for the sparrow,
Be comfort to my age. Here is the gold,
All this I give you. Let me be your servant,
Tho' I look old, yet I am strong and lusty;
For in my youth, I never did apply
Hot and rebellious liquors to my blood,
Nor did I with unbashful forehead, woo
The means of weakness and debility;
Therefore my age is as a lusty winter,
Frosty, but kindly——Let me go with you,
I'll do the service of a younger man
In all your business and necessities.

The unfeigned tears that trickled down the player's cheeks, as he delivered this generous and noble speech, were accompany'd with those of every spectator; and the applause that succeeded these, shew'd sufficiently the sense of the audience, and spoke in the strongest terms the praises of that sensibility, that feeling, which we are so earnestly recommending to every other player.

An expression like this, dictated only by a sense of the nature of the part, is in many other cases, as well as the present instance, preferable to all the noise and violence the most boisterous player cou'd employ in it.

Vehemence in an actor when ill placed, or when carry'd beyond the circumstances of the character he represents, or beyond truth or probability, will always be ridiculous: 'Tis only the common herd of an audience who are ready to say, that provided the player affects them strongly, 'tis no matter whether that be done justly or not; but the severest judge will allow that as an absolute

abſolute perfection is not eaſy to be arriv'd at in thoſe parts of a character, where the author means that the performer ſhou'd exert this quality, it is much better that he ſhou'd run beyond the goal than fall ſhort of it.

The firſt intent of all playing is to affect and move the audience, and in all theatrical performances, 'tis an invariable rule that the coldeſt repreſentation is the moſt defective. The principal thing the actor has to obſerve, when the circumſtances of his part make it neceſſary that he ſhou'd be vehement, is that he does not ſtrain his voice, ſo as to render it incapable of carrying him thro' the reſt of the piece. We ſhould with great juſtice laugh at the man engaged in a race, who ſhou'd throw out his legs to their utmoſt ſpeed at the ſetting out, and by that means render'd them incapable of carrying him to the end of the courſe.

There are ſome peculiar characters on the *Engliſh* ſtage, and thoſe of the very firſt conſequence, in which a caution of this kind is very neceſſary to the actor; we may number among the principal of theſe, *Pierre* in *Venice* Preſerv'd, *Richard* the Third, *Othello*, and *Oreſtes*.

Our players conduct themſelves very differently on this occaſion; and run into the two contrary faults, ſome of ranting themſelves hoarſe in the firſt ſcenes, ſo as to be incapable of ſpeaking the ſucceeding and finer parts of the character in ſuch a manner as to be heard; and others of ſaving themſelves for theſe moſt intereſting paſſages at the expence of being cold, inſipid and contemptible in all the reſt. In the character of *Oreſtes*, in the *Diſtreſſed Mother*, there is one capital ſcene in which the player is to exert his utmoſt

utmoſt power, and which requires him to be in a condition far from tir'd, when he enters on it. We cannot but think however that Mr. *Ryan*, tho' excellent in this peculiar ſcene of that play, ought to be reminded, that this is only a ſmall part of the character of that heroe, and that we purchaſe his excellence in it at too dear a rate, when he is ſo very tame as he has lately been in the preceding ſcenes of the play, in order to the ſaving himſelf for this. 'Tis not many nights ſince we ſaw him in this character, when a whole audience beheld him contemptible throughout the whole of his principal ſcene with *Hermione*; in which he was quite cool, and philoſophic, while ſhe was cunningly working him up to madneſs by every art that woman cou'd uſe; by promiſes, by threats, by ſoothing his paſſion, and by confeſſing a dread of her own frailty in regard to his rival. To all this he anſwer'd with all the calmneſs imaginable, with a ſoft accent and ſmooth weak voice.

Madam, your love has made him criminal.
You ſhall have vengeance, I'll have vengeance too.
——Firſt let me tear him piece-meal—He ſhall die.
——He dies by me—Have you a foe,
And ſhall I let him live? my rival too!
E'er yon meridian ſun declines, he dies.

We cannot but know that the poet meant theſe expreſſions ſhou'd give us an idea of rage and fierceneſs in the ſpeaker; and that there ought to have been a ſtrong conflict expreſſed in the character between love, revenge, and honour, and viſible in his air, his countenance, and his whole deportment, while the princeſs thus work'd him to her

her purpoſe, tho' at the expence of his honour; but we ſaw nothing of all this. How great a figure might a player make in ſuch a ſcene, who had ſufficient feeling and expreſſion about him, and who dar'd to employ them; and how contemptible muſt the coldneſs and inſenſibility of the performer, who is tame and patient under all this, appear to us, notwithſtanding that we know he is reſerving himſelf for ſomething great that is to come? Nay 'tis even the worſe for it, as our knowing this to be the reaſon of the unnatural defect we ſee, carries us forward to the ſucceeding ſcenes, and hurts that appearance of reality which is the greateſt of all the beauties in a theatrical repreſentation.

We remember the time when Mr. *Garrick*, thro' a diſdain of the meanneſs of this ſort of artifice, ran into the other extreme in many parallel caſes; when he always run himſelf ſo out of voice in ſome of the firſt ſcenes in the character of *Pierre* in *Venice Preſerv'd*, that he cou'd not even be heard when he came afterwards to that great ſcene in which he reproaches the ſenate: And when in *Richard* he cry'd out to *Richmond*, *Richard is hoarſe with calling thee to battle*, the audience was ſo ſenſible of the truth of the expreſſion, that they cou'd ſcarce diſtinguiſh the ſounds that convey'd it to them. But to the honour of this inimitable player, he has now fallen into ſo happy a method of moderating his fire in the beginnings of theſe characters, in order to the preſerving himſelf intelligible to their end, that he might be ſet up as an example to the performer we have juſt nam'd, had not we an opportunity of recommending the yet more maſterly addreſs of the veteran of the other houſe in

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this very part of *Pierre*, who has form'd the true rule by which to proportion the due ſtrength of voice to every part of that noble character, ſo as not to let us perceive a want of force any where, and yet to keep a reſerve to ſupport himſelf in the moſt violent ſcenes, with a power and energy, that the reſt of the great performers of the time muſt allow us to ſay, no body ever did, or perhaps ever will, come up to.

How exquiſite is the management of this player, in giving a ſtrength that ſcarce any body beſides himſelf ever gave to any thing, to that ſcene where he braves the reſt of the conſpirators, and in the midſt of all their threatnings againſt *Jaffeir* asks them,

Who talks of killing?——Who's he'll ſhed the blood
That's dear to me? is't you? or you? or you, ſir?
What not one ſpeak? how you ſtand gaping all!
On your grave oracle, your wooden god there.

And continues,

One ſuch word more, by heavens I'll to the ſenate,
And hang you all like dogs in cluſters.
Why peep your coward ſwords half out their ſhells?
Why do you not all brandiſh them like mine?
You fear to die, yet you dare talk of killing.

We remember *Walker*'s ſtraining till he was quite hoarſe at this ſcene, and incapacitating himſelf for any thing of conſequence that was to follow, and we have ſeen ſomething not unlike it in ſome later players of very great merit; but how are we ſurpriz'd to find in Mr. *Quin*, that all the

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fire he throws into this part of his character is but of a ſubordinate kind, when we ſee him under greater provocations, and before a greater aſſembly, riſing upon us to a much nobler height; and telling the trembling ſenate of *Venice*, with a majeſty, that it is eaſy to admire, impoſſible to imitate,

You my lords and fathers
(As you are pleas'd to call your ſelves) of *Venice*,
If you ſit here to guide the courſe of juſtice,
Why theſe diſgraceful chains upon the limbs
That have ſo often labour'd in your ſervice?
Are theſe the wreaths of triumph you beſtow
On thoſe, who bring you conqueſt home and honours?
Are theſe the trophies I've deſerv'd for fighting
Your battles with confederated powers?
When winds and ſeas conſpir'd to overthrow you,
And brought the fleets of *Spain* to your own harbours:
When your great Duke ſhrunk trembling in your palace,
And ſaw your wife, the Adriatick plow'd
Like a lewd whore, by bolder prows than yours,
Step'd not I forth, and taught your looſe *Venetians*
The task of honour, and the way to greatneſs;
Rais'd you from your capitulating fears,
To ſtipulate the terms of ſu'd for peace!
And this my recompence! If I'm a traitor,
Produce my charge—
Shew me the wretch that's baſe enough,
And brave enough, to tell me I'm a traitor.

After admiring the ſuperior force and dignity with which this inimitable player has rais'd the vehemence of this part of his character ſo highly beyond

beyond every thing we had before admir'd; how are we at length, on the appearance of *Jaffeir*, and his ſuing to him for a reconciliation, aſtoniſh'd to find that even this alſo was but a force of a ſubordinate kind, and to ſee that he has yet reſerved an infinitely greater ſtore of it, for that keeneſt of all reſentments which is due to a violated friendſhip. Even the vehemence of that execration with which he leaves the ſenate,

Curs'd be your ſenate! curs'd your conſtitution,
The curſe of growing factions and diviſions,
Still vex your councils, ſhake your publick ſafety,
And make the robes of government you wear
Hateful to you, as theſe baſe chains to me.

Is nothing when compar'd to that with which he tells the friend who had betray'd him,

Haſt thou not wrong'd me? dar'ſt thou call thyſelf
That once lov'd valu'd friend of mine,
And ſwear thou haſt not wrong'd me? Whence theſe chains,
Whence this vile death that I may meet this moment,
Whence this diſhonour, but from thee, thou baſe one!
——And wou'dſt thou have me live on terms like thine,
Baſe as thou'rt falſe?
Leave me—Nay then thus, thus I throw thee from me;
And curſes great as is thy falſehood catch thee.

Whoever has heard these and the rest of the keen and disdainful reproaches which *Pierre* justly throws on his friend, utter'd from the mouth of Mr. *Quin*, will agree with us, that the whole compass of the *English* stage affords nothing greater; and yet these in this judicious performer, are but the sequel of a whole part, and that a long one, kept up throughout with due dignity and spirit.

CHAP. IV.

Whether it wou'd be to the Advantage of all Players to be of a distinguished Figure?

THERE are a great many people that frequent the playhouses, who are less apt to be affected with those objects which are form'd to entertain the understanding, than with those destin'd to act principally on the senses. These gentlemen are oftener drawn to the theatres by the names of the actresses, than by those of the characters which they are there to perform; and as they are capable of judging of no perfections but those of figure and person, they are always disposed to take an amiable face for a very great talent in a performer; and wou'd have even a *Mistress Amlet* or a *Lady Bountiful*, have a regular set of features, a snowy neck, or an elegant person.

Tell these people that there is a new actress to appear upon the stage such a night, the first question they ask is, Is she handsome? And 'tis ten to one, but they forget to enquire at all whether she has any merit in the profession.

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The women pretend indeed that the figure of a performer of the other ſex, is the article they leaſt of all regard in him as an actor; but the player who has not ſome perſonal charms about him, will always find it extremely difficult to get their good opinion. The criticiſms that one hears among this part of an audience, always run more upon the imperfections or blemiſhes in the face or figure of the actor, than on thoſe of his performance; and almoſt on every occaſion of this kind, we ſhall find that the elegant or diſagreeable mien of the player is what has moſt taken up their attention.

Whoever therefore wou'd propoſe to himſelf to acquire fame on the ſtage, in the eye of the polite world, and to become the favourite of a numerous party, muſt remember that a graceful figure and an engaging aſpect are almoſt abſolutely neceſſary to it. We have had very few inſtances in *England*, in which an actor has been able to make his way to applauſe in the higher characters without perſonal charms; and in *France* it is an allow'd truth, that no man ever did or ever will be a favourite in this capacity without them.

'Tis only the herd of an audience however that fall into this ſort of abſurdity in their opinions; the better judges deſpiſe ſuch prejudices. They agree, that there are indeed ſome characters, in which we find, by the conduct of the ſcene, that the actor is out of nature if he have not ſomething amiable about him. They do not deny that even in moſt other parts a good perſon in the actor, is far from being indifferent; but they aſſert with great truth and juſtice, that our nicety in requiring a good face and well propor-

tion'd figure in the generality of performers is very abſurd and unreaſonable when we carry it, as is uſually done, beyond its juſt bounds. One cannot but acknowlege indeed that there is ſome ſort of juſtice in the diſguſt which an audience is apt to expreſs at the diſproportion'd and ſhocking figures of ſome who thruſt themſelves upon the ſtage; but it is unpardonable, it is contrary to juſtice, to our own intereſts, and to the neceſſities of a theatre, to determine againſt admitting into a company any man, of whatever merit he may be poſſeſs'd, if he happen not to have a face or ſhape more elegantly form'd than thoſe of the common run of mankind.

There are indeed ſome bodily imperfections which can never be ſuffered in the player, tho' it is very poſſible that people in real life may have them; nay even tho' the perſon whoſe character they are to repreſent on the ſtage actually had them. A hump'd back, or a leg half a foot ſhorter than the other, would not have prevented *Cæſar* or *Scipio* from being in real life eſteemed the firſt and greateſt men of the world; yet if a man, who had either of theſe natural imperfections, tho' he had all the merit imaginable as a player, ſhou'd attempt with theſe very imperfections to repreſent heroes, who alſo had them, he wou'd be hiſs'd, and perhaps pelted off the ſtage, for his abſurdity; we ſhould never be able to bring ourſelves to overlook thoſe perſonal imperfections in the player, which the people of the age he liv'd in, might think it eaſy to overlook in the perſon; or ourſelves in the hiſtory of the *Heroe*.

The Juſtice *Balance* of the *Recruiting Officer*, might poſſibly in real life have his face diſfigured

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by a wen, or drawn to one ſide by a large ſcar, and we ſhould eaſily have diſregarded it; but we ſhould never be able to reconcile the audience to a man, who, with either of theſe natural deformities, tho' join'd with ever ſo much merit, ſhou'd attempt to perſonate the character of this generous friend and father.

Nay, we have had a proof that even the peculiar bodily imperfection which is mentioned in the play itſelf as belonging to the heroe of it; and which we even expect the performer ſhou'd counterfeit to us by bolſters and bandages, yet if he be unhappy enough really to poſſeſs it, he offends us in the repreſentation. There is ſome where about town a perſon of the name of *Macbeth*, who has been long the darling of the theatres at the *Blue Boar*, the *Tennis Court* in *James-Street*, and ſometimes of the *Bartholomew-Booths*; and who has of late been honour'd with the title of the lame actor of low comedy in Mr. *Foot*'s drolleries. This perſon has, from an habitual attendance on the players, and a labour'd imitation of them for perhaps forty years together, acquir'd a knack of ſpeaking ſomething that ſounds like tragedy declamation. It is his misfortune to be lame of one leg; which is ſo much ſhorter than the other, that the higheſt heel he can wear is not enough to raiſe that ſide of his body to a level with the reſt. Tragedy is the darling paſſion of this player, and he concluded, from this natural imperfection, he was the fitteſt of all men to perform the character of *Richard* III. which *Shakeſpear* himſelf (with how much juſtice we do not preſume to ſay) has figured to us as lame.

Vaſt were the expectations of applauſe with which this man had flatter'd himſelf, when he ſhould come to that part of the character where this peculiar natural defect, by which he thought himſelf qualified to perform the part, ſhould come on: But what was the event? The audience, when he hop'd acroſs the ſtage as he ſpoke the line,

Dogs bark at me as I halt by them,

inſtead of the applauſe he liſten'd for, burſt out into a loud laugh. They could never reconcile themſelves to have an original impos'd on them, when they expected or deſir'd no more than a copy.

There is a ſeeming contradiction and abſurdity in the judgment of the world on theſe occaſions: but it is only ſuch, 'tis not a real one. There is even, when duly conſider'd, a ſort of juſtice in it. We look on the ſoul alone as conſtituting the man; and in inſtances where we know that nature had indeed given a defective body for the habitation of a great and noble mind, we expect that the ſtage, ſo far as concerns the figure of the heroe, ſhould redreſs theſe injuries, or at leaſt ſhould hide from our inſpection theſe ſcarce juſtifiable caprices. As tragedy pleaſes principally by the air of grandeur and nobility which it gives to men, we are not willing that in the paintings it gives us of great events and of exalted perſonages, any thing ſhould occur which might take off from that honour and eſteem which it naturally gives us for the human ſpecies.

As we ſeek in tragedy after objects that may flatter our pride, we wiſh to find in comedy ſuch

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as may keep up our gaiety and spirits: our intent is by no means answer'd, if while the character the player acts makes us merry, the figure of his body causes a melancholy, by putting us continually in mind what frail creatures we are, and how liable to be render'd even ridiculous by defects which may arise from accidents. Absolute deformity in a player is not to expect from us the same sort of indulgence that we sometimes bestow upon persons in whom there is at worst but an entire absence of every thing that is pleasing: and on the other hand, a mere want of charms in the person of an actor, ought never in prejudice us against him in the manner that an absolute deformity would. Let us be sensible of perfections and imperfections, but let us also be just; let us pay a respect to personal charms where we find them, but let us not despise merit for the want of them, when there is nothing absolutely shocking in the person who is possess'd of it. Let us not refuse ourselves the pleasure of being affected in the most agreeable manner by an actress who has real charms in her face or figure; but if another happens to want this lucky advantage, let us not for that reason refuse her our applause, if she has other powers of pleasing which are not plac'd within the reach of age or disease.

Personal charms being more peculiarly the advantages of the other sex than of ours, the ladies may be more naturally expected to overlook the want of this sort of merit in an actor, than we to pardon it in an actress. We can easily bring ourselves to be satisfy'd with any thing of our own sex that has real merit, and has no real deformity; and we would fain bring them to consider, that the actor need not always be

look'd upon as the lover, and that an over-severity against the deficiencies of external charms would often deprive the stage of persons who are indebted to nature for qualifications infinitely more valuable than those which we are angry with her for having been capricious enough to refuse them.

We don't know our own interest if we insist that every actor and actress that appears before us should be of an extraordinary graceful figure; we consider nothing of the laws, the necessities, or the conveniencies of a theatre when we expect it; and perhaps it were to be wish'd, even for our own better entertainment, not only that all the personal charms we are so fond of were not to fall to the share of every one of our actors, but even that some of the persons who are to entertain us in this way, might not have any one of them.

Regular features, well proportion'd limbs, and a noble and distinguishing air and deportment, ought without doubt, in general, to prejudice us greatly in favour of a performer; but there are evidently some characters in which these accomplishments are not only useless, but it wou'd even be a merit in the player to want them. We cannot but acknowledge that an audience frequently bears the breach of all probability on these occasions without seeming hurt by it; that it is often even with a particular pleasure, that we see a fine blooming young creature take up the character of an old hag; or an actor form'd by nature to please by his aspect, disguise himself, and hide all those charms under the habit of a coarse and clumsy rustic: People indeed go to a play, as they themselves acknowledge, not to see re-

alities, but imitations of them; and however severe they may be on the subject of conformity in general between the original and the copy that is presented to them, yet they universally expect that the actors should not have the defects and imperfections in themselves, which they are to represent under their characters. The copy often charms them, when the original would be disagreeable; a player who was to represent a drunken man, would be very ill received if he chose to come drunk upon the stage to do it. But after acknowledging all this, we are to distinguish between the peculiar characters of comedy and the general form of its representations.

There are certain characters in which the player is to entertain us only by the imitation of something that is extremely ridiculous in real life. And the pleasure which we are to receive from some others, is meant to be form'd only by contrast; whether that be between the pretensions of the personage, and the title he has to expect them to be received, or between the effects which he ought to produce among the other persons with whom he is concerned in the course of the play, and those he really does produce among them.

In the parts of the first kind, the more the actor is possess'd of those perfections that are the direct opposites to the defects which the reality of the character requires him to imitate, the more we are pleased with him; and the more merit we allow him in giving us a true and faithful portrait of the imperfections which nature had given him no means to imitate. In those of the second kind, the fewer the player has of those accomplishments, on which the person he is to

repreſent piques himſelf, or which the other ridiculous or extravagant characters of the piece are made to allow and reverence in him, the more evidently does he ſhew the ridiculous vanity, and blind preſumption of the one, and the abſurd judgment of the others; and of conſequence the more of the true ſpirit of comedy does he throw into the character in the firſt caſe, and into the play in general in the laſt.

The part of a man whom the author means to repreſent as fond of aſpiring to the character of a beau, without any of the natural advantages or acquir'd accompliſhments for it, will excite leſs laughter in the audience, and conſequently will leſs anſwer the intent of the author, as well as of every body concern'd, if it is play'd by a clean genteel fellow who is well qualify'd to have excell'd in the part of a polite gentleman, or whom we have been us'd to ſee do ſo in other plays; than if performed by one, who has no one requiſite toward the real character of the beau either from nature or art. The blunder of ſome fooliſh perſon in a play, who takes a footman for a man of quality, will give us much leſs pleaſure, if we ſee the part of the footman performed by a man of a good mien and genteel deportment, than if it be executed by one who carries about him nothing from nature that can juſtify the miſtake.

It appears therefore, that inſtead of its being neceſſary or convenient that all the actors of a company ſhou'd have the advantage of elegant and handſome figures, it is abſolutely eſſential to our being well pleaſed at their repreſentations, that ſome of them be not of this fine turn.

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The players are not however to extend this maxim too far in their own favour. We allow them to be in many cases qualify'd for the stage, tho' they want certain natural beauties; but we do not allow so much if they have the opposite defects or blemishes. There is a great difference between the absence of beauty, and deformity: and in the case before us we never can receive people well, unless they are free from all blemishes in figure; many of which, tho' we pass over easily enough in persons in any other road of life, we judge intolerable on the stage.

The profession of a player requires, and the exercise of it supposes, that a man has a good understanding, and some natural graces. We expect that his countenance, his looks, declare to us, at first sight, that he possesses the first of these qualifications; and we cannot be contented if we find an external form that looks incompatible with the other.

We expect that every player should have a lively and expressive countenance; we require this even in those whose sole business it is to play the characters of dupes and fools: for in the case of all defects and imperfections, it is, as has already been observed, the copy, and not the original, that we expect to see on the stage; nor should we allow any merit in the actor, who appear'd to us no other than just what he really was. We can give no applause to the man who represents a fool to us upon the stage, unless we know that he does not act the part of a fool in the world; and in all other cases of this kind, we the more applaud the art of the player, as we know it to be the less assisted by nature.

If

If the managers of our theatrical entertainments ſhould chuſe to put Mr. *Anderſon* or Mr. *Uſher* into the part of *Abel Drugger* it is poſſible that the folly of the part might hang more naturally about them than it does about Mr. *Garrick*; but 'tis not this that an audience expects on ſuch occaſions: we may venture to foretel, that neither we nor our children ſhall ever ſee that character with ſo much pleaſure as we now ſee it play'd by Mr. *Garrick*, unleſs, which is ſcarce probable, another actor of equal merit ſhould undertake it.

Whatever player has the happineſs of an expreſſive countenance, may flatter himſelf that he is poſſeſs'd of one of the greateſt natural advantages that fall in the way of his profeſſion; but he is to remember, that it is an advantage which requires many others to accompany it, and that ſhews in a very ill light the defect, where there are not ſuch. A ſprightlineſs of countenance, and a lively, piercing, and diſtinguiſhing look, neceſſarily require a graceful action in the whole figure to ſupport and enforce them: without theſe the graces of the other look unnatural; and theſe ſo much depend upon the ſymmetry of the body, and the juſt arrangement of its parts, that all the art and addreſs in the world cannot give them, without theſe natural advantages. The arms too long or too ſhort, the ſhoulders too high, or any other viſible and obvious diſproportion of the limbs, on which the action peculiar to the ſtage principally depends, render the player, in ſpite of all other advantages, neceſſarily diſagreeable to us, becauſe they make his action neceſſarily defective. Imperfections of this kind, to a certain degree, are not obſervable in the generality of men; but in the very ſame height in which

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in others they are not disagreeable, they are insupportable in the player. If a man will content himself to live among the multitude, we do not pretend to laugh at him, because his mouth is somewhat too large, or his legs are a little ill-shap'd; but if he will thrust himself upon us in a light that calls for our strictest examination, his mouth, which before would have been little noticed, becomes then enormous; and his legs, which only seem'd not to call for our praise, now draw upon them our severest censure.

It is not only necessary that the several exterior parts of the player bear a due proportion to each other; but his whole figure requires also its regularities.—His stature is not to be out of the common rule, or at least it must not be too much so. Those who are extremely particular, unless supported by very eminent merit, ought to be proscrib'd the theatre, either for their gigantic or their dwarfish stature. It is very difficult for a man of too large a size to be graceful in many of his actions; and smallness of stature, when not absolutely dwarfish, tho' it does not wholly exclude the person from the stage, yet we continually see it makes him want a thousand advantages which people of a better figure have; and is even ridiculous in many things which would extremely well become a man a few inches taller. To see people in the galleries laugh in the midst of a serious scene, when such a player expresses a violent rage and menacing indignation, and that even tho' he does it ever so justly, would make one apt to say, that certain passions were not allow'd to persons under a certain standard. This would be going too far indeed; but perhaps it will be no more than

just

just to say, that they are not so conveniently expres'd by such persons as they may be by others; and that the expressing a transport of violent rage, or the inspiring an audience with a reverence for the character represented, are not so properly in the way of men of this sort of figure, nor are of the number of things which they are formed by nature to excel in.

The actions of the player are all to be borrow'd from those of people in real life; and whenever we see him representing a character on the stage, our imagination sets him in a manner in the place of a man acting in the world, and views him in the circumstance and situation of the person to whom the sentiments he delivers properly belong: he should therefore always be in some degree the sort of man to whom not only such thoughts, such resolutions, but such a deportment as he assumes also is natural; since he is to make the same impression on us as the real character would. We are too apt to laugh at the sight of a trifling and contemptible figure, agitated by all the noble fury of a violent rage, and cannot prevent our imagination from recollecting that we see the player, not the person represented; and when this unlucky agent proceeds to carry the heroe off the stage, and suppose him exerting the like emotions in the same manner in real life, we cannot help smiling at the idea of the ridiculous figure he would then make with them.

The man of a stature smaller than ordinary appears then to be improper for the capital characters in tragedy; and if we were rigid in our determinations, we might also (unless any peculiar merit pleaded in his favour) take from him all the principal parts in comedy, and only bear with

with him in those particular characters in which the deficiency of his height would serve to make the ridicule he was destin'd to raise, more strong than it could be if given us from a man of a more pleasing figure.

These are considerations of the utmost weight, and such as a very great share of merit has often been forc'd to yield to. Our managers have more than once rejected persons who have offer'd themselves, not only for playing the first characters, but even the subordinate ones, merely for want of height, tho' they have not been deficient in any other particulars; and we have seen within these few years, that when Mr. *Johnson*, a person of considerable merit in tragedy, but of an enormous stature, was received by a manager who had more good nature than the gentlemen in that station usually have; it was in vain that he attempted to bring the audience to approve him, even with the advantages of an expressive countenance, a sonorous voice, and a majestic deportment. He appear'd a giant among a nation of dwarfs; a *Gulliver* surrounded by a *Lilliputian* army: if he was engag'd in a quarrel, it was no merit in him to conquer a man whom he seem'd so vastly an over-match for; and if he made love, we had no idea but of a *Polyphemus* and *Galatea*; and thought it unnatural for a little creature to venture to like him. The disproportion between this gentleman's stature and that of Mrs. *Giffard*, with whom he usually play'd, was esteem'd to be such as no audience would ever be brought to bear; but we are happy enough now to be taught otherwise: we have the good fortune to live in an age when there are players whose merit is infinitely an over-

ballance

ballance to this ſort of diſproportion; and in whom the faculties of the ſoul ſhine ſo ſtrongly, that we have no attention to beſtow upon the height or ſhortneſs of the body.

The world has ſo entirely overlook'd the deficiency of ſtature in Mr. *Garrick*, that he now leaves off the cork ſoals which us'd to give him half an inch in height; and one of the greateſt genius's of the age has thought it neceſſary to write a treatiſe (which to the misfortune of the world is yet in manuſcript) to prove that he is not ſix foot high.

The diſproportion in ſtature between Mr. *Barry* and Mrs. *Cibber* is ſcarce leſs than that which us'd to ſhock us between Mr. *Johnſon* and Mrs. *Giffard*; yet have theſe two egregious deluders in that reſpect perfectly blinded our eyes. Who ever thought it monſtrous that *Barry* in *Caſtalio* ſigh'd for this lady in *Monimia*, or that ſhe met his paſſion with an equal warmth; or who ever thought of the diſproportion between *Romeo* and *Juliet*, where that excellent player, with a voice ſweet as an angel's ſong, ſays to her,

The ſaints that heard our vows and know our loves,
Seeing thy faith and thy unſpotted truth,
Will ſure take care and let no wrongs annoy thee.
Upon my knees I'll aſk them ev'ry day,
How my kind *Juliet* does? and ev'ry night,
In the ſevere diſtreſſes of my fate,
As I perhaps ſhall wander thro' the deſert,
And want a place to reſt my weary head on,
I'll count the ſtars and bleſs 'em as they ſhine,
And court them all for my dear *Juliet*'s ſafety.

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The tenderneſs that ſuch an actor as Mr. *Barry* is able to throw into a ſpeech like this, leaves us no power to attend to height or ſhortneſs; nor did any one ever think him too tall for the tender creature he was courting, when with a heartfelt paſſion, never ſo well expreſs'd before, he ſpeaks the beſt lines that ever were written on the occaſion, much better than they ever were ſpoken before, on his ſeeing the object of his wiſhes at her window,

——What light thro' yonder window breaks?
It is the eaſt, and *Juliet* is the ſun.
See how ſhe hangs upon the cheek of night,
Fairer than ſnow upon a raven's back,
Brighter than brilliants in an *Ethiop*'s ear;
Were ſhe in yonder ſphere, ſhe'd ſhine ſo bright,
The birds would ſing, and think the day were breaking.
See how ſhe leans her cheek upon her hand.
O that I were a glove upon that hand,
That I might kiſs that cheek.

The reader will pardon us on this and ſome other occaſions, that where we quote paſſages from plays, we give them as the author gives them, not as the butcherly hand of a blockhead prompter may have lop'd them, or as the unequal genius of ſome bungling critic may have attempted to mend them. Whoever remembers the merit of the players ſpeaking the things we celebrate them for, we are pretty confident will wiſh he ſpoke them abſolutely as we give them, that is, as the author gives them; and if we add to this hint, the throwing in ſometimes a line or two that they

they ought to ſpeak, but by ſome infatuation do not, we hope they will thank us for it.

To return to our ſubject, we are to obſerve that no body who ever heard theſe ſpeeches deliver'd by Mr. *Barry*, recollected how many inches he was taller than the lady he addreſſes them to; nor have we leſs certain inſtances of the want of height being rendered imperceptible by the ſame ſort of merit, than the redundance of it is in this inſtance.

We believe that Mr. *Garrick* is the ſmalleſt man that ever attempted the character of a king or heroe, who makes the capital figure in the play he appears in; but we alſo believe him to be one of the greateſt men that ever did ſo. We have already quoted the excellencies of Mr. *Quin*, in the character of *Pierre*, whoſe figure all the world muſt allow pleads vaſtly in his advantage in the character of that great, that hardy commander. We expect, from the nature of the character, a man of ſtature in it; yet we do not obſerve that Mr. *Garrick* is an inch too ſhort in it while he plays it; or ſcarce that he is a whit inferior to Mr. *Quin*, while he's ſaying to his falſe friend, who aſſures him he has taken care to ſave his life,

I ſcorn it more, becauſe preſerv'd by thee:
And as when firſt my fooliſh heart took pity
On thy misfortunes, fought thee in thy miſeries,
Reliev'd thy wants, and rais'd thee from the ſtate
Of wretchedneſs in which thy fate had plung'd thee,
To rank thee in a liſt of noble friends,
All I receiv'd in ſurety for thy truth
Were unregarded oaths; and this—this dagger,

Giv'n

Giv'n with a worthleſs pledge, thou ſince haſt
ſtol'n:
So I reſtore it back to thee again;
Swearing by all thoſe pow'rs which thou haſt
violated,
Never from this curs'd hour to hold communion,
Friendſhip, or intereſt with thee; tho' our years
Were to exceed thoſe limited the world.
Take it—farewell—for now I owe thee nothing.

If we would ſee the power of art to hide the deficiencies of nature in regard to this performer in a yet ſtronger light, let us recollect him in King *Lear*. We are apt to believe that the want of figure never appear'd ſo glaringly in Mr. *Garrick* as in this character. It muſt be acknowledg'd that to look at him only, he appears rather a *Gomez* or a *Fondlewife* than a *Britiſh* monarch: but who ever recollected this when they heard him ſay to his unnatural daughter,

Blaſts upon thee,
Th'untented woundings of a father's curſe
Pierce every ſenſe about thee. Old fond eyes
Lament this cauſe again, I'll pluck ye out,
And caſt ye with the waters that ye loſe
To temper clay.——No, gorgon, thou ſhalt
find
That I'll reſume the ſhape which thou doſt think
I have thrown off for ever.

If there be any thing that comes in competition with the unluckineſs of this excellent player's figure in this character, it is the appearance he made in his new habit for *Othello*. We are us'd to ſee the greateſt majeſty imaginable expreſs'd through-

throughout that whole part; and tho' the joke was ſomewhat prematurely delivered to the public, we muſt acknowledge that the appearance he made in that tramontane dreſs made us rather expect to ſee a tea-kettle in his hand, than to hear the thundering ſpeeches *Shakeſpear* has thrown into that character, come out of his mouth. Tho' we acknowlege that Mr. *Garrick* did well to part with this character to a man whoſe figure ſeems more adequate to our ideas of a heroe; yet we cannot but obſerve at the ſame time, that when he perform'd it, he no ſooner ſpoke than we forgot every thing we ſaw, to give attention to what we heard; and that notwithſtanding his naturally contemptible figure, no man ever fill'd a ſtage with more majeſty than he, in thoſe ſpeeches in the third act, where he expreſſes all the rage and anguiſh mix'd together that words perhaps are capable of deſcribing.

Ha! falſe to me!
I ſwear 'tis better to be much abus'd,
Than but to know't a little.
What ſenſe had I of her ſtolen hours of luſt;
I ſaw it not, thought it not, it harm'd not me;
I found not *Caſſio*'s kiſſes on her lips.——
He that is robb'd, not wanting what is ſtolen,
Let him not know't, and he's not robb'd at all.
I had been happy if the general camp,
Pioneers and all, had taſted her ſweet body,
So I had nothing known! O now for ever
Farewel the tranquil mind, farewel content,
Farewel the plumed troops, and the big war,
That make ambition virtue: O farewel
The ſpirit-ſtirring drum, th' ear-piercing fife,
The royal banner, and all quality,

Pride,

Pride, pomp, and circumſtance of glorious war;
Farewel! *Othello*'s occupation's gone.

REFLECTIONS
Naturally ariſing from the Subject of the firſt Book.

REFLECTION I.

Thoſe Actors who appear in ſubordinate Characters can no more ſucceed without a good Underſtanding, Senſibility, and Fire; than thoſe who play the principal Parts.

THE hopes of receiving thoſe warm, general, and repeated applauſes, ſo earneſtly deſir'd by the writers of theatrical pieces, as well as by the performers in them, is by many underſtood to be reſtrain'd to thoſe parts alone which make the capital figure in the piece, and to thoſe performers only who are employ'd to play them. The amiable actreſs, they obſerve, who gives ſo many affecting graces to the tears and lamentations of *Monimia*; or by an amazing contraſt repreſents as naturally the perplexity and irreſolution of a lady *Brute*, never fail'd to have as many lovers as there were men of the audience; and the rival charmer of the other houſe, whoſe perſon is more ſtriking than perhaps the beſt acting in the world ever was, or ever will be, is ſure that a whole audience are impatient and eager till ſhe enters on the ſtage, and never ſee her leave it but they curſe the poet who made her part in

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the ſcene ſo ſhort: there are however, among the claſs of under actreſſes, ſome whoſe envious diſpoſition, impatient under the neglect of what they perſuade themſelves are equal merits and equal charms in their own perſons; and to comfort themſelves under the misfortune of not being in the ſame degree the idols of the public, tell the world that the *Cibbers* and the *Woffingtons* of the age would never have become the objects of ſuch univerſal adoration, if it had not been their fortune to have early appear'd in the capital parts of ſome of the beſt of our plays; where the character they repreſented was too amiable not to intereſt every body in its favour, and where they had opportunities of ſhewing themſelves under all the advantages that dreſs and the utmoſt art could give them. They inſiſt upon it, that the beſt actor in the world would loſe much of the applauſe his real merit deſerves, if always condemn'd to play ſubordinate characters: and that an actreſs, tho' form'd ever ſo perfectly to pleaſe and to charm, will always loſe a conſiderable ſhare of the natural effect of her beauty, when the principal concerns of the play, or the intereſts of the capital characters, do not all fall in with or depend upon the part ſhe acts.

To do juſtice to the modern players we muſt allow, that as there are ſome among them who perform the parts of kings and princes, who would appear to much more advantage in the characters of footmen and bailiff's followers; as witneſs my lords of *Weſtmoreland* and *Mortimer*, with fifty others of the nature with good King *Duncan*; ſo there are others who perform ſo decently in their under characters, that we are apt to wiſh them in thoſe people's places. Let us, however, examine

examine ſtrictly into the merit of the cauſe, and we ſhall generally find that the opinion the lower players entertain of their being ſet in an ill light by acting the leſs important characters, is ſo very abſurd, that people who are not overburthened with merit, have in that very caſt of parts the only means of ſhining.

When Mr. *Foot* play'd *Othello* at the *Hay-market*, for the benefit of the very ill-treated Mr. *Macklin*, there was a perſon among the under actors, who had been inſtructed by that maſterly judge of ſpeaking, to pronounce about ſix lines ſenſibly, that never had been pronounced ſo before; and who acquir'd more applauſe by it than he had ever done in his whole life, tho' he had frequently appeared at ſome of the motley theatres above mention'd, in the characters of King *Richard*, *Bajazet*, *Toriſmond*, and my Lord *Townley*.

The perſon we hint at was one *Park*; his part in *Othello* was that of *Montano*, who engages with and is wounded by *Caſſio*. 'Tis the great reproach of our managers, that they eſteem parts, not from the nature of them, but their quantity; and a long part or a ſhort one are always underſtood as ſynonimous terms for a good and a bad one. In conſequence of this, *Montano*, whoſe part in the whole does not much exceed a dozen lines, had been always us'd to be play'd at the theatres by a perſon ſomewhat above the degree of a ſcene-ſhifter, and what he ſpoke had been always laugh'd at accordingly: the audience were on this occaſion ſurpriz'd, on *Othello*'s aſſigning this perſon the cauſe of a quarrel, for which he very ſeverely reprimanded him, to hear him

anſwer in an extremely ſenſible manner, tho' without any thing of the cant of tragedy,

Worthy *Othello*, I am hurt to danger.
Your officer *Iago* can inform you,
While I ſpare ſpeech (which ſomething now offends me)
Of all that I do know;—nor know I ought
By me that's ſaid or done amiſs this night;
Unleſs ſelf-charity be ſometimes ſin,
And to defend ourſelves it be a crime,
When violence aſſails us.——

The audience look'd with aſtoniſhment at one another, and gave a thunder of applauſe: the young fellow was taken great notice of, was ſoon after promoted in one of the theatres, and put in a way of arriving at all that perfection in the profeſſion, the preſages of which the world thought they ſaw in him. He was not ſenſible, any more than other people, that to keep up his credit he muſt always act *Montanos*; and that, tho' he did this very well, he would have made a very miſerable *Othello*. He obtain'd no more applauſe in the higher characters he afterwards was thrown into, than he had done before; and had not ſome good fortune carry'd him off the ſtage in time, he would certainly have again been reduc'd the next ſeaſon to *Montano*, *Roſſano*, and the reſt of the gentlemen of that character.

The ſubalterns of a company will not be perſuaded of it, yet nothing is more certain than that there requires leſs merit and parts to make a figure in trifles, than in characters of conſequence,

and

and that it is better to be applauded in a livery, than laugh'd at in embroidery.

The women have the ſame advantages in their way as the men, if they could but be brought to have modeſty enough to be ſenſible of it. People who have ſeen Mrs. *Hale* in ſome of the capital characters, may think it a ſtrange piece of abſurdity to bring her in competition with the celebrated Mrs. *Woffington*: we allow very readily indeed, that in a *Lady Brute* or a *Jane Shore*, the advantage would appear very glaringly on Mrs. *Woffington*'s ſide; but it is but very lately that we have had an opportunity of ſeeing them in what might have been thought a very diſadvantageous light for Mrs. *Hale*, and yet in which we have ſeen that actreſs vaſtly ſuperior to the other.

We have in ſhort beheld the waiting gentlewoman *Hale* ſhew the queen *Woffington* in a very ill light in the compariſon; we have ſeen the juſtneſs of playing in *Cephiſa* quite eclipſe the imaginary merit of *Andromache*. We do not pretend to ſay that if the tables had been turn'd, and the maid's character given to the miſtreſs, the advantage would ſtill have lain on that ſide: but if this is an allowed caſe, the queſtion is, Whether, conſidering herſelf merely as an actreſs, it would not be more to Mrs. *Woffington*'s advantage to play *Cephiſa*?

The majeſty of ſorrow in *Hector's Widow* was quite loſt in the new dreſs'd *Andromache* of the fourth act; never indeed was a prettier figure ſeen upon the ſtage; but a wooden thing with wires might have equall'd it in geſture: the whole mind of the lady was now bent upon charming the audience as Mrs. *Woffington*, not as *Andro-*

mache; and while the pretty moppet talk'd of tears, which the vermillion on her cheeks prevented her from daring to uſe her handkerchief to dry up, and told her confidant, with all the tranquility, or rather all the unmeaning eaſe, of a perſon who was thinking of ſomething elſe, that there was a dreadful conflict in her ſoul, and her own determin'd death was the end of it; the leſs ornamented *Cephiſa* ſpoke her fears, her tenderneſs, in accents that affected even the galleries.

Who could bear to behold the ſimpering widow caſting her eyes into the boxes to ſee who moſt admired her, or buſy'd in the adjuſting the fall of a flounce on her ſleeve, while ſhe was delivering, with all the inattention of a ſchool-boy at his taſk,

I thought, *Cephiſa*, thou hadſt known thy miſtreſs:
Couldſt thou believe I would be falſe to *Hector*?
Fall off from ſuch a huſband! break his reſt,
And call him to this hated light again,
To ſee *Andromache* in *Pyrrhus'* arms!
Would *Hector*, were he living, and I dead,
Forget *Andromache*, and wed her foe?
—*Andromache* will not be falſe to *Pyrrhus*,
Nor violate her ſacred love for *Hector*.
This hour I'll meet the king, the holy prieſt
Shall join us, and confirm our mutual vows:
This will ſecure a father for my child;
That done, I have no farther uſe for life.
This pointed dagger, this determin'd hand,
Shall ſave my virtue, and conclude my woe.

And,

And, on the contrary, who of the audience heard *Cephiſa*, with all that terror and tenderneſs with which the nature of her part could inſpire a ſenſible actreſs, during the time of *Andromache*'s coming to the opening herſelf to her, deliver theſe broken ſentences,

Theſe dark unfoldings of your ſoul perplex me.
—For heaven's ſake, madam, let me know your griefs:
—I cannot gueſs the drift your thoughts purſue;
But O! I fear there's ſomewhat dreadful in it.
And,—
Oh! madam, explain theſe riddles to my bodeing heart.

But acknowledg'd ſhe deſerv'd all the laviſh praiſes that were proſtituted to the other.

We do not mean to infer from this, that Mrs. *Woffington* ought to be thrown out of her high characters, and Mrs. *Hale* put into them; but that it would be well if the managers would beſtow ſome more of theſe ſhorter parts in tragedies upon Mrs. *Hale*, when ſhe is not better employ'd; and that Mrs. *Woffington* may be put in mind to be a little more upon her guard the next time ſhe acts a heroine.

That this lady is capable of ſucceeding in tragedy, is ſufficiently evident from her playing *Jane Shore*: her whole deportment in that character was vaſtly ſuperior to that of any actreſs we have ever ſeen in it; but, unleſs ſhe will be pleas'd to take a little more pains about her mind, and a little leſs about her face, for the future, we ſhall venture to prophecy to her, That when that face (as one time it will be) is not worth a

farthing, that mind will not be worth a fiftieth part of one.

The ſuppoſing that good parts make people play well, cannot indeed much injure the characters of performers of eſtabliſh'd reputation; but the principle in itſelf is falſe, and the concluſions drawn from it occaſion great imperfections in the generality of our theatrical repreſentations. The greater part of the young players conclude from it, that as they can expect nothing better for ſome years, than to be made to put up with the leaſt advantageous characters, they need not take a great deal of pains about them, ſince they would be only overlook'd if they did. They think it a ſort of injuſtice in an audience to expect any great perfection in them, while they continue in this claſs; and perſuade themſelves, that they may paſs well enough without many of thoſe natural advantages which the players who appear in the principal characters are expected to have.

It is not to be denied indeed, that the excellence and importance of the character repreſented, contributes greatly to make the player ſhine in it; and it is equally true, that an audience are patient under a ſort of mediocrity in the performers of the lower characters; people do not trouble themſelves nearly ſo much about the manner in which the parts of little conſequence to the fable are play'd, as about the juſtneſs of the repreſentation of thoſe which are eſſential to the conduct of the whole; but it is alſo true, that a good actor will often be able to give a ſort of importance to a ſubordinate part, which, while as careleſsly play'd as ſuch uſually are, the audience would never have known the beauty

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of *. It is alſo certain, that tho', in conſideration of the deficiency of a number of proper ſubjects, we are induc'd to pardon in the perſons who only play ſubordinate parts, the want of a peculiarly graceful figure, or of that ſuperiority in the gifts of nature in general, which we look for in the players of the principal parts; yet we expect to find them tolerable: and indeed there is not one of the natural advantages which we require to be poſſeſs'd eminently by the firſt perſons of the theatre, but we deſire to ſee in ſome degree in all the reſt.

Let us look into any one of the plays of our writers of credit, and examine by it the merits of this point. We ſhall find all the characters engag'd in the whole play concern'd in animating and giving force to every ſcene of it, either by the ſhare their paſſions give them in the incidents of it, or by that which they give to the paſſions of the reſt, by the difficulties and perplexities they find themſelves in, or by thoſe into which their cunning or their abſurdity throw the perſons whom they meant to injure or to ſerve: by their well-concerted blunders, the happy fruits of the ſprightlineſs of the author's imagination, are the funds of everlaſting pleaſure to the greater part,

* The very firſt-rate actors would find a way of encreaſing their reputation greatly, if they would ſometimes take a pride in appearing in the ſecond or even the third parts in our better plays. The honour of occaſioning an audience to diſcover beauties in a part which they had never found in it before, is, in reality, much ſuperior to that of obtaining applauſes from any of thoſe grand characters which would itſelf command it, even tho' performed by but a moderate player.

at leaſt, of every audience, and when nicely conducted, to the whole: or finally by their ambiguous actions or diſcourſe, which, preſenting two ſeveral faces, gives occaſion to the error of ſome other character which is to be deceived, and by their continuance kept up in the miſtake they were deſtin'd to raiſe. The very loweſt characters in comedy are in this light to be continually in motion, and they are to keep our minds agitated during the whole piece: The very leaſt among theſe are honoured with the name of actors in ſuch or ſuch a play; a name only given to the perſons in a dramatic work, becauſe they ought to be in continual action during the performance of it.

Voice and memory are ſaid by many to be all the qualifications that are neceſſary to the ſubordinate actors: But can voice and memory alone be ſufficient for the player in repreſenting thoſe characters, which, tho' not plac'd in the very fulleſt point of view, are yet often not leſs difficult to perform than even the capital part in the play? If the players of this lower rank want underſtanding, or fire; or, above all things, if nature has left them deficient in ſenſibility, how is it poſſible they ſhould ſucceed, we don't ſay to pleaſe, but barely to make themſelves ſupportable, even in the leſs conſiderable of thoſe leſſer characters; ſince we find there is not one of them on whom the other more eminent perſonages of the piece, in a greater or ſmaller degree, have not a dependance?

In tragedy the ſuperiority of one of the parts of the play to another, is much greater than in comedy; but even the very loweſt of the performers in theſe pieces, muſt not be wanting in the talents, at leaſt in ſome degree, by which the greateſt

greateſt are enabled to pleaſe. In many of the modern tragedies, we find a number of characters which tho' they do not intereſt the audience ſo highly as the three or four capital perſons of the drama, yet in the courſe of their parts have a great many very important things committed to them to be delivered, and thoſe ſuch as the audience will not bear to ſee diſfigured and mangled. Some paſſages there are in thoſe characters which are only introduc'd as the confidants of the Kings and Heroes, and particularly in their recitals of events; this is a buſineſs they are generally charg'd with, and is, at leaſt to the generality of an audience, as ſtriking as the moſt artfully conducted ſcenes, by means of the ſucceſſion of the paſſions they are addreſs'd to, and the pomp of images in the deſcription.

How can an actor ſucceed without thoſe natural advantages we have been deſcribing, when he is to preſerve all the dignity, all the beauty, that the author has given to one of theſe paſſages in the character he repreſents? Theſe intereſting recitations make indeed uſually but a very ſmall part of the character of the confidant; and it is for this reaſon that theſe parts are ſo difficult to perform, or more properly ſpeaking, are ſo ſeldom play'd well: A performer who is ſupported in his action by a part which is through the whole intereſting and pathetick, muſt be a very bad one indeed, if he does not get applauſe from it. 'Tis a much greater difficulty to be graceful in the more trivial parts of a character in which there is ſomething eminent: to find that ſupport from the knowledge of the profeſſion, which it is in vain to hope for from the far greater part of the character that it is allotted to appear in, provided

the performer's figure be not abſolutely ſhocking, it is his buſineſs to impoſe upon the audience by a rich and well fancy'd dreſs. The player muſt have been favour'd in an extraordinary manner by nature, who can command reſpect in a plain habit.

The perſons whom the ſeveral neceſſities of a theatre throw at a great diſtance from the ſhining characters, were much to be pitied, if while they have occaſion for ſo many accompliſhments and advantages from nature, they had reaſon to fear that while they poſſeſs'd all we require of them, they ſhou'd never be in the way of exciting, in any great degree, our attention or regard: Let us undeceive them in this diſcouraging circumſtance, and give a proper encouragement to their merit, by aſſuring ſuch that our good opinion of them is not proportion'd to the conſequence of their parts, but to the manner in which they acquit themſelves in them; that real merit will find the way to ſhew itſelf as well under the name of *Roſſano* as of *Lothario* or *Horatio*; and that when we are examining the merit of a portrait, we are not influenc'd by its being that of a monarch, more than by its being that of a common ſoldier.

REFLECTION II.

Tho' Perſons are happy in the principal Advantages which are required in theatrical Performers, ought they not in general, after a certain Age, to quit the Stage?

WHAT has been already obſerved in regard to the figure, may in a great meaſure be applied alſo to the age of the theatrical

trical performer. The greater part of an audience may expect to ſee upon the ſtage none but ſuch whoſe face and figure are made to pleaſe, to charm the eyes; or ſuch as are in the full bloom of life as to their age. We have abundantly prov'd that the former wou'd be an unreaſonable injunction upon the managers of a playhouſe; and, on juſt examination, the other will prove no leſs ſo.

In the ſame manner as we are more diverted with the part of a perſon in a play who piques himſelf upon a beauty which he does not poſſeſs, as the perfection imaginarily poſſeſs'd by the character is in reality leſs poſſeſs'd by the perſon who performs it; a character in a play, which the author has made very abſurdly to affect the charms and prerogatives of youth, ought to pleaſe us the more highly, as it is perform'd by an actreſs who really has ſo little youth, that ſhe cou'd not affect the having it in private life without being ridiculous.

It is evident therefore that players in certain characters appear to much the greater advantage for being paſt the age of love and pleaſure.

But we ought to admoniſh the actors, and much more the actreſſes, not to abuſe this principle. When the cool reception they meet with plainly informs them that they can no longer pleaſe, let them not obſtinately perſiſt in forcing themſelves upon us; and what is yet of much more conſequence, and of more frequent neceſſity, let them, before they are oblig'd wholly to quit the profeſſion, have the prudence and the reſignation to give up thoſe parts, which tho' they might be-

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come them very well while young and ſprightly, are now no longer proper for them.

The p'ayers of both ſexes, we have ſaid, ought always to remember that on the ſtage every thing diſguſts us, in a very ſenſible manner, which calls to our remembrance the defects and infirmities of human nature; as we never fail of bringing every reflection of this kind home to our ſelves. In general when a perſon is become, thro' age or other infirmities, an object more fit to excite melancholy and compaſſion, than joy and pleaſure, the ſtage is no longer his proper ſcene of action, and he ought wiſely to retire. It will appear abſurd that a perſon to whoſe time of life the cuſtom of the world forbids even the ſatisfaction of enjoying, or at leaſt of frequently being preſent at public diverſions, ſhou'd arrogate the right of being the perpetual Heroe or Heroine of them. Indeed nothing leſs than ſome ſingular and inimitable excellency, can make us bear with a performer, whoſe decays in perſon, voice and features remind us continually of the fate that attends ourſelves.

The gratitude and juſtice of the world have made it a general rule, that thoſe perſons who have deſerved the greateſt applauſe on the ſtage in their earlier life, ſhou'd be received longer on it in their advanced years than others: The world is generous to them in this; and they ought to be equally grateful to the public in remembring that they owe to the applauſes and favours they have before received, the continuance of their reception in the ſame capacity ſo long as it ſhall be found agreeable or welcome; or till they ſee themſelves replac'd by other riſing players, who

are able to join thoſe advantages, which themſelves now have no longer, to thoſe which they yet retain.

When we find that it is neither with a view to ſordid intereſt, nor out of a fooliſh ſelf-ſufficiency and preſumption, that performers continue among a company with whom they us'd to ſhare the utmoſt praiſes, we are to regard them as worthy veterans, grown old in our ſervice, and ſtill attempting to adminiſter to our entertainment; we have no right, in this caſe, to impute to them the injuries of nature; but if we on any occaſion take their age into our remembrance, it ought to be only to lament that people, who of all others ought to have enjoy'd a laſting youth, are not exempted from the common laws of nature, but muſt ſubmit to grow old and feeble as well as other men.

Men may continue the profeſſion of playing to an advanced age much better than women. The reaſon is evident, that as this more robuſt ſex bears the attacks of age much better than the other, it alſo preſents it to our view in a leſs afflicting and leſs diſagreeable manner. The *French* ſtage will long remember the favourites of three ages, *Baron* and *Guerin*, who after ſeeing every body grow old about them, far from being born down by the burthen of years themſelves, continu'd to merit the applauſe of the greateſt judges, by retaining all that life and ſpirit, by which they had firſt obtain'd it, and which the younger people, tho' of conſiderable merit, found it very difficult to come up to.

We remember *Bowman*, who at a time of life twenty years beyond that at which the generality

rality of players become diſagreeable to us, cou'd give ſuch force to the character of *Raymond* in the *Spaniſh Fryar*, that the houſe never fail'd to ring with a long applauſe, when he declar'd to his ſuppos'd ſon, his contempt of the ſtateſmen of the times, and told him they were

A council made of ſuch as cou'd not ſpeak,
And dar'd not if they cou'd—A miniſtry
Whence honeſt men
Baniſh'd themſelves for ſhame of being there;
A government which knowing no true greatneſs,
Was ſcorn'd abroad, and liv'd on tricks at home.

And we never ſhall forget *Johnſon*, who in comedy not only pleas'd, but excell'd to the very laſt; who at an age more than equal to that of *Bowman*, never appear'd upon the ſtage, without being the greateſt player on it; and who has left us to ſeek, what we ſhall perhaps never find, a good *Coupler*, a good *Smugler*, and a good hundred other things, which ceas'd to be any thing with us, when he ceas'd to play them.

The liſt of Veterans for this age ought not to be clos'd without mentioning the favourite *Leveridge*, who, tho' his province was only ſinging, ought to be remember'd for ever, for pleaſing us at leaſt as well as he did our *Fathers* and our *Grandfathers*.

What the audience has a right to demand of thoſe actors who are authoriz'd by the ſuperiority of their talents, to continue upon the ſtage after a time of life, when it would be decent for others to quit it, is, that they have ſo much prudence, that while their intereſt in the company may give them a power of chooſing for themſelves what parts they pleaſe, they take only thoſe, which

which ſuit with that period of life they are at this time arriv'd at. This is a caution which, (tho' it wants not its weight with reſpect to the men,) ought chiefly to be regarded by the women. A well made man may poſſibly be decently gay at threeſcore, but the wrinkled face of a woman, addreſs'd with all the flattery the poet cou'd beſtow on ſomething that he meant to deſcribe as little leſs beautiful than an angel, is an abſurdity too glaring to go down with the meaneſt ſpectator.

Baron, the moſt eminent of the two *French* players juſt mention'd, tho' of the more proper ſex for ſuch an attempt, notwithſtanding all his merit, was never able to make the audience reliſh the inclination he had to be playing the parts of young Princes and Heroes at the latter end of his life: The audiences, tho' they lov'd and eſteem'd the man extremely, cou'd not have patience at hearing him call'd *Son* and *Child* by people to whom, by his age, he might have been grandfather.

THE

BOOK II.

Of the Advantages in which it is requiſite that thoſe Players, who play the capital Parts, ſhou'd be ſuperior to thoſe who perform the ſubordinate Characters.

THOSE performers who in comedy have the capital parts aſſign'd them, and whoſe polite addreſs and ſpirited action is expected to enliven and ſupport the repreſentation; and thoſe who in tragedy are uſually employ'd to play the characters of perſons worthy of our admiration for their virtues, or of our compaſſion for their misfortunes; and we may add thoſe who either in comedy or tragedy have the parts of lovers; ought to be indowed with a great many natural advantages, beſides thoſe neceſſary to players in general, and which may be diſpenſed with in thoſe who are employed only in ſubordinate characters.

The advantages neceſſary to perſons in this higher rank in the theatre are of two kinds. Some are wholly exterior, ſome entirely interior. The latter of theſe affect the underſtandings of the ſpectators; the former only ſtrike their ſenſes: The interior ones will make the ſubject of the firſt ſection of this book, the exterior of the ſecond.

SEC-

SECTION the FIRST.

Of the interior Qualifications which an Audience requires in the Players, who perform the capital Parts.

CHAP. I.

A gaiety of Temper is abſolutely neceſſary to the Players in Comedy, whoſe Buſineſs it is to make us laugh.

IF we wou'd be determined by conſulting the people of the higheſt taſte in dramatic writings, we ſhou'd be for wholly baniſhing from comedy thoſe characters of footmen, waiting maids and country ignorants, which at preſent take up ſo much of our attention in the generality of the dramatic pieces of this claſs: And the ſame taſte wou'd alſo diſcard a great many other perſonages of the drama, whom the author has introduc'd to excite our laughter by their pleaſantries, or by their ridiculouſneſs.

Theſe delicate judges are for making it a law, that no characters under a certain rank are to be introduc'd upon the ſtage; they tell us that it is a want of reſpect to the public to ſuppoſe an audience can be entertain'd with people of leſs importance; and before they will condeſcend to give their attention to an actor in a new comedy,

comedy, they expect him to produce his credentials in the titles and qualities of the perſon he repreſents.

It is not to be deny'd, that good comedies may be written without theſe ſubaltern characters; but *Steel*, *Congreve*, *Farquhar*, and many more of our own authors, who have ſucceeded beſt in this way; and among the *French*, *Moliere*, *Reynard*, *Dancour*, &c. ſhew us that theſe characters may be introduc'd into pieces, which are nevertheleſs allow'd to be excellent comedies: And indeed tho' we highly eſteem thoſe writers, who have given into the other method, and confin'd themſelves ſolely to what we peculiarly call genteel comedy; yet we cannot allow they are the only authors who deſerve applauſe in this kind of writing.

Perhaps it is a pretty juſt obſervation, that the true end of comedy is to make us laugh; and tho' it may be made to ſucceed very well in this attempt, when it employs only the higher characters that are allotted to it, yet ſurely it is no reproach to it to take in theſe other, tho' ſomewhat lower ones, provided only that they are natural and decent. It is certainly poſſible that a ſcene may give us in every ſentence the true delicate genteel comedy, even tho' the characters are not taken from high life; and perhaps it may be ſaid with truth, that there is no ſuch thing as low comedy, except that which diſcovers a low genius and a creeping ſpirit in the author.

Let the poet therefore, who knows how to make a man of the common rank ſpeak agreeably to his character and ſtation in life, and at the ſame time to throw an entertaining ſpirit into his diſcourſe,

diſcourſe, never heſitate to bring him on the ſtage before the moſt polite or delicate audience: But let not the actor, who is naturally of a genteel and ſerious turn, chuſe to exhibit himſelf in the merriment of a character of this rank. We have before obſerved, that the actreſs who wiſhes to ſucceed, ſhou'd always keep her mind in a ſtate of eaſe, and be ready to take up every paſſion her part for the night requires her to ſhine by the feeling of; and particularly not to ſuffer the good or ill accidents of her private life to influence her to any peculiar ſettled turn of mind. The comic actor who wou'd excell and wou'd endeavour to pleaſe, is even more ſubject to this general rule, than thoſe to whom we have originally apply'd it. The deſire of applauſe on their juſt performing, is almoſt the only paſſion that ought to be allow'd to actors in comedy: As to the general turn of their minds, they ſhould be the moſt joyous people in the world, and have ſcarce a ſenſe of any thing but pleaſure. Above all things the affluence or narrowneſs of their circumſtances ought never to be allow'd to affect their tempers, nor ought they to be influenced by the number of the audience, or the receit of the houſe.

A perſon who acted in the double capacity of player and manager, wou'd be doubly ſubject to be affected by theſe chances; but it is our good fortune, that at one of the houſes, the manager is not an actor at all; and at the other he is ſuch an actor that he is out of the reach of an accident of this kind, as his performing will at any time command a crowded audience.

The

The ordinary players, tho' not immediately concern'd in the profits of the houſe for any ſingle night, are yet many of them affected by a thin company in a manner that very little favours the hopes of the manager of having better ſucceſs afterwards.

We are indeed in juſtice to excuſe from any charge of this kind, the perſons who might with moſt reaſon be touch'd by ſuch a ſight, we mean the better actors; but the others, to a man, are inſufferable on theſe occaſions. Let us recollect Mr. *Quin*, and his fellow tragedians, in ſuch a ſituation. 'Tis a provoking circumſtance to ſee a player like him act the part of *Falſtaff* to empty benches; yet ſuch is the caprice of the town, that we have had an opportunity of being witneſſes to that within theſe few months, and of ſeeing at the ſame time that he was above the reach of ſuch an accident, while he knew the fault was not his own. He play'd on this occaſion as well as he had ever done in his life; but the majeſty of the great *Worceſter*, *Douglaſs* and *Glendower*, was hurt by it beyond meaſure, and the whole ſet of nameleſs things beſide that fill the ſtage in tragedy, as the guards do at an opera, were ſo highly enrag'd that the world paid ſo little reſpect to their merit as to go to the other houſe, that not recollecting they were as much oblig'd to the few that were there, as if ten thouſand more had join'd them, they ſkip'd over half their parts; deliver'd the reſt with an indolence ſufficient to prevent any perſon's coming again where they play'd; and took ſnuff, or talk'd of ſomething elſe in whiſpers, in the moſt intereſting ſcenes.

The

The houſe where Mr. *Quin* is engaged, cannot boaſt alone the honour of having ſometimes empty benches; the *Tempeſt*, as acted lately at *Drury Lane*, had indeed an audience of *Calibans* in the gallery; but the pit mourn'd its vacant ſeats, and ſcarce ten people were to be numbered in the boxes.

We are to obſerve on this occaſion however, that the preſence of a maſter behind the ſcenes kept the people employed in this murdered comedy, as much in order, as the incouraging attention paid by a full houſe cou'd have done; and not a drunken ſailor but play'd his part at leaſt as well as he ever did in his life, or is ever likely to do.

We wiſh to ſee the laugh of an inſelt pleaſure follow the comedians at every ſtep; and we are never ſo perfectly pleas'd, as when we can diſcover that in diverting us, they are heartily entertaining themſelves.

'Tis only by thoroughly reliſhing the comedy in their own breaſts that they can ever repreſent it feelingly to us, or acquire our applauſe by it. When a man gives us all the wit and drollery of a comic character, without himſelf ſharing in the diverſion he affords us, the inſipid coldneſs is eaſily perceiv'd, and we only look upon him as a mercenary drudge, who has taken up the profeſſion of the player, becauſe he had not induſtry enough to get his bread by any other.

On the other hand, when the actor can bring himſelf to ſhare the pleaſure with his audience, he is always ſure to pleaſe: A juſt reliſh of the ſpirit of the character he repreſents, is the true inſpiring God, the real *Apollo* of the comic player; and we ſhall never find a man who is joyous in the

the giving us what makes us ſo, that is not poſſeſs'd of all the fire and genius that characteriſes the man whom nature has cut out for this ſort of life.

Let us not however forget to guard againſt ſome faults into which a too free uſe of this doctrine may lead ſome of the modern players in this ſtile, by telling them that it is in general, in their deportment only, not in their ſmiling faces, that we expect to diſcover that gaiety and joyous diſpoſition, we wou'd have their parts inſpire them with.

The *French* ſtage affords many inſtances of people becoming liable to this cenſure; but the natural gravity of our nation renders it ſomewhat more rare among us: We are not, indeed, without inſtances of people who expreſs rather too much of the merriment they intend us in their own faces, particularly at the new theatre: And we would adviſe theſe actors, by way of remedy, to attend the places we have in the former part of this work celebrated for the renown'd exploits perform'd in them by Mr. *Macben.* Every holliday furniſhes the occaſion of a play at one or other of theſe, and every play almoſt affords an inſtance of this precious folly, that ought to put it out of countenance with any body elſe, in the perſon of a heroe, who makes a figure there under the name of *Boſtock.* This gentleman is humble enough in his private vocation to walk before the chair of a lady at that end of the town; but when he aſſumes the buſkin he grows unmeaſurably great, ſwells to twice his ordinary ſize, and like the prieſteſs of the *Delphic* God, becomes another creature: But ſuch is the joy of this ſudden change of fortune, ſuch

his

his ſatisfaction in his own performance, that we have ſeen a ſettled ſmile upon his face thro' the whole part of *Bajazet*.

People of naturally grave countenances, whatever merit they may be poſſeſs'd of, are but very badly cut out for comedy; and on the contrary the player who has it in his intention to make us merry, has often the advantage of appearing the more and more comic, as he affects to be more and more ſerious: It is not more rational to ſay to the tragic actor, *Shed tears your ſelf if you wou'd draw any from me*, than it is to admoniſh thoſe in the comic ſtyle, by telling them, *if you wou'd have me laugh often, you muſt very ſeldom laugh your ſelf.*

The player is never to loſe ſight of this great point, that his private ſentiments and character are to be hid behind thoſe of the character he plays; he muſt remember that the perſon he repreſents, often diverts us with the things that he does or ſays premeditately and of deſign; and often alſo by thoſe which drop from him accidentally and without attention: Theſe are frequently the moſt affecting inſtances of the whole character, and in theſe the actor would take off all the effect, if he expreſs'd in his countenance a cunningneſs and joy at the conſequence, which he knew wou'd attend them: The air of inattention with which theſe ſort of pleaſantries are conducted, is what gives them all their force; for a laugh upon the face of the actor is ſufficient at any time to rob us of the whole beauty of them; and in the other caſe nothing is more certain than that a thouſand pleaſantries wholly loſe their effect, as well on the ſtage, as in private converſation, if the perſon from whom they come

does

does not diſſemble his intent to raiſe a laugh, and his hopes to ſucceed in it.

CHAP. II.

No Man who has not naturally an elevated Soul, will ever perform well the Part of a Heroe upon the Stage.

WE ſhall not, we hope, be accuſed of giving the pompous name of *Elevation of Soul* in the title of this chapter, to that ridiculous and idle imagination that is found in certain modern tragedy players, who ſhall be nameleſs, who are ſo infected with the enthuſiaſm of their profeſſion, that they become princes and heroes for life, by perſonating ſuch characters on the ſtage; who can by no means condeſcend to throw off their grandeur with their buskins, but will carry it in full force to make them the ridicule of the next company they fall into.

Theſe people never receive a viſit from a familiar friend, but they perſwade themſelves they are giving audience; nor mix among the deliberating parties of their company, but they fancy themſelves aſſiſting at a council of ſtate. They ſpeak to their domeſticks, or if they have none, to the porter or coffee-boy, with all the ſolemnity of voice with which a Roman general delivers his orders; and if they pay a compliment to an author, who has caſt them an advantageous part in his play, they do it with an air that tells him they imagine they are conferring a favour on him by accepting it, or giving him a reward for his merit.

We

We flatter ourſelves alſo that no body will miſunderſtand us ſo far as to ſuppoſe we mean to give this lofty name to the arrogant opinion ſome other gentlemen of the ſame rank have conceived of their own conſequence in the world: or to ſuppoſe an actor has an elevated ſoul, becauſe he is mad enough to imagine, that great players are at leaſt as eminent in the eye of reaſon as great men; and would tell the world, if he dar'd, that it is almoſt eaſier to be a heroe, than to repreſent one well upon the ſtage.

The vanity and pride of the former ſet, tho' abundantly ridiculous, may be uſeful to them; and while it renders them contemptible among their familiars, may ſerve to make them excellent in the eye of the public; as it will always keep up in them a ſuitable turn of mind for the executing their parts to advantage. It will doubtleſs lead them into many diſagreeable ſcrapes among their friends; but it will in return give them the means of claiming an uncommon ſhare of applauſe upon the ſtage; and by accuſtoming themſelves to play the kings and generals in their family, they will acquire a habit of doing it more naturally in their profeſſion, than any man can, who only takes up his royalty or heroiſm for the uſe of the preſent moment, or while it is requir'd of him in his part. Yet this habitude, however inforc'd, will at the utmoſt be only ſufficient to influence their exterior figure and deportment; it will indeed throw an air of dignity and greatneſs into their mien and geſtures, but it will never be able to give that noble pride, that elevated grandeur to their expreſſion, which is neceſſary to the inſpiring us with that generous tranſport with which we love to hear the ſentiments of the

tragic poet. It is poſſible indeed that this ſettled habit may give a man, who has a good figure and an eaſy carriage from nature, all that dignity which we find aſcribed by a very great writer, with an uncommon warmth, to the late Mr. *Booth* in his aſcending his throne in the character of *Pyrrhus*; but it will never give to any man the innate greatneſs, with which Mr. *Quin* pronounces the ſentiments of *Cato*.

The high opinion alſo which many of our players have of their profeſſion, may not be without its uſes to them. This imaginary excellence in it may naturally be the occaſion of their loving it more than they otherwiſe wou'd have done: the player of this turn perhaps may owe the greateſt part of his excellence on the ſtage to this very opinion; and wou'd never have taken half the pains he has done to excell in his profeſſion, if he had thought leſs nobly of it.

The mind neceſſarily takes an elevated turn from the exalted idea it forms of the objects it is converſant about; but there is beſides this, another far nobler elevation of ſoul, which the actor in tragedy muſt ſhew us he is poſſeſs'd of before he can riſe to that applauſe, which ſome of our preſent theatrical performers have found the way to deſerve.

This conſiſts in a noble enthuſiaſm, produc'd from a paſſion for every thing that bears the character of true greatneſs: This muſt be native and inherent in the man; and this is what we underſtand by the term *elevation of ſoul*. 'Tis this enthuſiaſm which diſtinguiſhes the capital performers in tragedy, from thoſe of a moderate ſhare of merit; and 'tis peculiarly by means of this valuable and rare qualification that ſuch a player

player as we have juſt now mentioned in *Cato*, creates as it were in the hearts of even the lower claſs of his audience, ſentiments and emotions which they never felt before, nor even had ever ſuſpected themſelves to be capable of feeling.

The power of elevating our hearts far above our real ſelves, is the great prerogative of tragedy; but in many caſes the poet alone is not able to do this: We muſt hear, not read the paſſages that are calculated to this end; and the great, the excellent performer gives them that eminence upon the ſtage, which we ſhou'd never have found in them in the cloſet. The language in which the poet chooſes to convey his moſt heroic, moſt ennobling ſentiments, is, to a very great part of a common audience, what a piece of muſic prick'd down upon paper is to a perſon who has not been taught any thing of that ſcience.

The merit in both caſes is indeed all there the poet and the compoſer have both perfectly done their parts; but, in the one caſe, till a good ſinger by his voice, gives the notes their ſoul and expreſſion, or a good player enforces and explains the ſentiment by his expreſſive elocution; in the other, the harmony, is not known to the one, nor is the ſublimity of the ſentiment underſtood by the other.

It will readily be allow'd us, that no author in our language, or perhaps in any other, has arrived at that height in the ſublime that *Milton* has; and we flatter ourſelves that it will alſo be allow'd that no man ever arriv'd at an equal perfection in ſpeaking the ſublime with Mr. *Quin*. There is alſo this other happy connexion between that great writer and this great player, that their turn of ſoul ſeems much the ſame; their ſentiments ap-

pear to be of a like kind; the very language of *Milton* ſeems contriv'd on purpoſe for the voice of Mr. *Quin*, and the voice of Mr. *Quin*, while he is ſpeaking it, ſeems form'd on purpoſe for the language of *Milton*. Whoever has heard him read any part of the *Paradiſe Loſt* of that divine author, knows the full force of what we are advancing; but to thoſe who have not had that pleaſure, we may recommend his playing *Comus*. This is a light every body has an opportunity to ſee him in; and in this it is eaſy to obſerve, that he has all that ſtrength of conception and expreſſion, we have now been celebrating, all that power of enforcing the ſentiments of an author which we have deſcribed, and of giving meaning to every period, while he addreſſes it to thoſe who otherwiſe wou'd have enter'd into none of its beauties.

We have lately had the advantage of a contraſt to prove the truth not only of this propoſition in general, but of this particular inſtance of it. We have ſeen another *Comus*, and have obſerved a whole audience (the few of a modern audience who are capable themſelves of underſtanding *Milton* only excepted) yawn over the whole part, and ſhew no ſign of pleaſure but in the ſcenery and the bacchanals. What an abſolute inattention was there to the ſpeech in which *Comus* diſcovers his ſurpriſe at the lady's voice, as ſpoke by this weak attempter of the part! and how ſtrong is the ſenſe, how evident the beauty of every line as Mr. *Quin* delivers the ſame words! With how noble a ſhare of the enthuſiaſm we have been mentioning, with what a ſeeming heartfelt rapture does he ſay,

Can

Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe ſuch divine enchanting raviſhment?
Sure ſomething holy lodges in that breaſt,
And with theſe raptures moves the vocal air
To teſtify its hidden reſidence.
How ſweetly did they float upon the wings
Of ſilence thro' the empty vaulted night,
At every fall, ſmoothing the Raven-Down
Of darkneſs till it ſmil'd——I oft have heard
My mother *Circe* with the *Syrens* three
Amidſt the flowr'y kirtled Naiades
Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs,
Who as they ſung wou'd take the priſon'd ſoul
And lap it in elyſium—*Scylla* wept
And chid her barking waves into attention,
And fell *Charybdis* murmur'd hoarſe applauſe.
Yet theſe in pleaſing ſlumber lull'd the ſenſe,
And in ſweet madneſs rob'd it of itſelf.
But ſuch a ſacred and home-felt delight,
Such ſober certainty of waking bliſs,
I never heard till now——

Notwithſtanding that this ſpeech contains a multitude of beauties of the higheſt kind, yet they are, to many ears, what prick'd muſick is to the eye of an ignorant perſon; they lie too deep to be taſted in their true dignity by any but thoſe who have ſtudy'd the nature of this kind of poetry: But as this player ſpeaks them, the myſtery is all thrown off, the veil is caſt away, and we are apt to believe even the upper gallery hardly contains a perſon who does not truely taſte ſome of the moſt beautiful paſſages *Milton* has left us.

If it were our buſineſs to enter on criticiſm in this place, we have an ample field for it in the epithet given to the applauſe of the *Fell Charybdis* in this ſpeech. We have given it as Mr. *Quin* ſpeaks it: *Hoarſe Applauſe*, the printed copies have it, and accordingly others ſpeak it, *Soft Applauſe*: We have heard many a learned coffee-houſe diſpute, and ſome more ſerious ones, on the ſubject of this paſſage; but it may perhaps be eaſy to cut ſhort all arguments about it, by finding a parallel one, and ſeeing what the ſame author has done there. If we enter truly into the ſpirit of *Milton*, there is a line in his deſcription of the teſtimony death gives of pleaſure at the news of his being to be let looſe upon the world, in his *Paradiſe Loſt*, which he meant to be of the ſame kind with this. He ſeems to have thought it as forc'd a point to make the *Fell Charybdis* applaud the ſounds of *Circe* as the *Fell* monſter, death to ſmile at any thing: He has in the one of theſe caſes expreſs'd the action by an epithet the moſt contrary to the nature of the ſubject that he cou'd poſſibly have ſelected, and tells us that death grin'd horrible a *Ghaſtly* ſmile; and we are of opinion, he meant to do juſt the ſame in the other.

We are apt to believe that the word *Hoarſe* in the paſſage before us was meant in the ſame light as the epithet here; and till we are convinc'd that *Ghaſtly* has a natural alluſion to the word *ſmile*, we ſhall ſuppoſe that *Soft* cannot be properly plac'd where the printers of *Comus* have given it.

To return to our ſubject, we muſt allow that there is ſomething in the very language of *Milton*, that gives a natural turn to dignity in the ſpeaker; but

but in regard to the actor before us, this adventitious help is not neceſſary to his acquiting himſelf with the ſame maſterly ſuperiority: To be magnificent in a little part is bombaſt, not great; but whenever the character he repreſents will bear him out in it, he never fails of giving us the *Monarch* or the *Demigod* in every ſpeech of it. The language in tragedy the moſt unlike of all to that of *Milton*, is that of *Ambroſe Phillips*. This author has ſucceeded in that ſpecies of writing in a new way, by throwing off all the falſe ornaments, all the idle pomp of diction, and bringing the ſpeeches of kings and heroes to be more like thoſe of other men. Here, if any where in tragedy, the actor is left to keep up the dignity of ſpeaking himſelf; but here we find Mr. *Quin* as great as in the moſt ſonorous numbers. Whoever recollects this actor in the character of *Pyrrhus*, when he receives the embaſſy of *Oreſtes*, will own that no man ever look'd or ſpoke ſo much like a king as he, when he returns for anſwer,

The *Greeks* are for my ſafety more concern'd
Than I deſire—I thought your kings were met
On more important council—When I heard
The name of their ambaſſador, I hop'd
Some glorious enterprize was taking birth——
Is *Agamemnon*'s ſon diſpatch'd for this?
And do the *Grecian* chiefs renown'd in war,
A race of heroes, join in cloſe debate
To plot an infant's death—What right has *Greece*
To aſk his life? Muſt I, muſt I alone,
Of all her ſcepter'd warriors be deny'd
To treat my captive as I pleaſe. Know, prince,
When *Troy* lay ſmoaking on the ground, and each
Proud victor ſhar'd the harveſt of the war,

Andromache and this her ſon were mine,
Were mine by lot, and who ſhall wreſt them
from me?

There is here no pomp of language to ſupport the player, no dignity but what is in the ſentiment; yet we hardly ſee an inſtance on the ſtage in which the player is more the *Monarch* than Mr. *Quin* is in this; and 'tis evident that he gives, by his manner of delivering the words, a majeſty to the ſpeech, which none but a very judicious reader will find in the cloſet. If any thing can add to the idea of true greatneſs, which we conceive of the character of *Pyrrhus* from this ſpeech, it is that noble, that haughty reſentment with which this player makes him receive the ſecret threatning couched under ſmooth words by the ambaſſador, of the *Greeks* joining againſt him in caſe of a refuſal. With what majeſty, as well as warmth, two things not eaſily combin'd, except by this excellent actor, does he anſwer,

No, let them come, ſince I was born to wage
Eternal wars; let them now turn their rage
On him who conquer'd for them; let them come,
And in *Epirus* ſeek another *Troy*.
'Twas thus they recompens'd my godlike father,
Thus was *Achilles* thank'd—But, prince, remember
Their black ingratitude then coſt them dear.

Tho' the lower part of an audience have not generally that readineſs of apprehenſion which people accuſtom'd to the height of poetry have brought themſelves to, they have all, however, the ſeeds of it in them, and wait only to have them warm'd and enliven'd by the actor's elo-

eloquence, to bring them to unfold themſelves. The player, who, while performing in the character of ſome great man, perceives himſelf full of that celeſtial fire with which he, while living and tranſacting the things he is repreſenting was alſo animated, will find no difficulty in diffuſing the ſacred flame all about him; his audience will meet it as it breaks from him, and the very meaneſt ſoul will find ſenſibility enough to catch ſome ſpark of it. The player thus qualify'd and thus exerting himſelf, converts the moſt timid and puſillanimous heart into a bold and noble one, and every individual of his audience, at leaſt for the moment while he is delivering the noble ſentiments of his part, becomes a heroe. People are in a manner perſuaded that themſelves only want opportunities to aſtoniſh the world with their magnanimity, and that if they were placed in the very ſituation of the heroe whom they ſee the player perſonating, they ſhould come up to all the noble heights he arrives at, and perhaps excell him. At every elevated ſentiment the poet has thrown into the character, they fancy to themſelves that they are only entertained with the noble thoughts of their own hearts. They contemplate in the great man they are admiring, what they firmly believe themſelves capable of being; and admire and reverence in his virtues the imaginary greatneſs of ſoul to which they fancy themſelves ſhou'd have aſpir'd, if fortune had been favourable enough to them to have given them occaſions of exerting it.

We hear much of the amazing power of the antient orators, and are apt to wonder at the accounts we receive of the additional force which

they gave in ſpeaking to thoſe pieces of theirs which are left us: Something like this enthuſiaſm we are deſcribing, gave them the energy they are ſo highly celebrated for; and if we wou'd form a true idea of the effects it had on their auditors, the beſt method we can take, is to be attentive to a good tragedy, in which a conſiderable part falls to the ſhare of Mr. *Quin*.

CHAP. III.

As all Players have occaſion for the great Quality of Senſibility; *thoſe in a particular manner who propoſe to themſelves to ſucceed in drawing Tears from us, have more Neceſſity than any others, for that peculiar kind of it, which we ſometimes expreſs by the Word* Tenderneſs, *tho' more ſtrongly by the appropriated Term* Feeling.

IT is a maxim as old as the days of *Horace*; *if you wou'd have me ſhed tears, you muſt weep your ſelf firſt*. That excellent author addreſs'd this doctrine to orators; but it is ſtill more applicable to actors.

Would the tragedian ſtrongly impreſs the illuſion of his performance upon us, he muſt firſt impreſs it as ſtrongly upon himſelf; he muſt feel every thing ſtrongly, that he would have his audience feel: In order to his utmoſt ſucceſs, it is neceſſary that he imagine himſelf to be, nay that he for the time really is the perſon he repreſents, and that a happy frenzy perſwades him that he is himſelf in his own perſon betray'd, perſecuted, and expoſed to all the unmerited injuries, for which we are to pity him. Nay it is neceſſary that this voluntary error paſs from his imagi-

imagination to his heart, and on many occaſions that a pretended diſtreſs produce from him real tears: In this caſe we no longer perceive in him the cold player, who by his ſtudied tones and forc'd geſtures, is labouring to intereſt our hearts in imaginary adventures; he is to us the perſon he repreſents, and if ſome unſurmountable accident does not oppoſe the effect he ought to produce, he is ſure to work all the wonders that can be perform'd by his profeſſion. The players of this maſterly kind are the only abſolute ſovereigns of the world: They command in an irreſiſtible manner the heart, the very ſoul itſelf. They are the only enchanters who know how to give feeling to the moſt lifeleſs, and naturally inſenſible beings.

Such as this is the power of ſorrow when well expreſs'd: This tender affection of the ſoul is a kind of epidemic malady, the progreſs of which among an audience is amazing; it ſpreads itſelf every way at once, and infects the moſt remote ſpectators with a rapidity ſcarce to be conceiv'd. Contrary to the nature of all other infections, this propagates itſelf only by the eyes and ears; but it paſſes through both theſe ſo regularly and ſo certainly, that it is ſufficient if we ſee a perſon in real and undeſerv'd affliction; nay, if we only hear of it, we are ſure, whether we will or not, to join in it.

The utmoſt effects of the other paſſions are by no means ſo contagious: A man gives himſelf up in our company to all the extravagant emotions of rage and fury; yet we remain in perfect, undiſturb'd tranquility; another is elevated to the clouds with a tranſport of joy, yet we, tho' preſent at the whole ſcene, continue ſe-

rious and unmov'd; but tears and the ſigns of diſtreſs, even in a perſon ever ſo indifferent to us, have almoſt always the power to affect us, to touch our hearts, and make us ſympathize: Born as we are to pain, to ſufferings and misfortune, we read with a feeling ſorrow our own fate in that of the unhappy wherever we meet them; and the wretchedneſs of others is a ſort of mirror to us, in which we ſee and cannot but contemplate with bitterneſs and ſorrow the miſeries which we know are attach'd to our own condition.

It is not difficult to aſſign the reaſon of our finding it thus eaſy to afflict and mortify ourſelves: We ſhall underſtand it pretty readily, if we enquire of our hearts what is truly and exactly the nature of that pleaſure which we receive from ſeeing a tragedy perform'd: Our feeling ourſelves affected is not always a proof of the ſuperior merit of the piece; we often go thither on purpoſe to pick up ſome impreſſions which we know we ought to have, but cannot find that we really are poſſeſs'd of; or to throw off ſome others which diſpleaſe, and ſeem not ſo agreeable as they ought to be, to the circumſtances of our hearts.

What is moſt of all ſurprizing is, that there appears to be a ſort of joy in the expreſſing our ſorrow; and we often go to ſuch a repreſentation on purpoſe to indulge a melancholy, and give ourſelves an opportunity of ſhedding tears. Every man may aſſure himſelf, from the remembrance of ſome part or other of his life, that this odd inclination is natural; and many reaſons ſpecious enough may be aſſign'd for it. The difficulty is not to aſſign ſome one cauſe for it, but to determine

mine which of all thoſe that offer themſelves to our thoughts is the moſt general.

When we obſerv'd that the misfortunes of others, are a ſort of mirrors, in which we meditate upon the fate ourſelves are deſtin'd to, we might have eſtabliſh'd a diſtinction; which however may be more advantageouſly plac'd here, and which will ſerve to diſcover the ſource of at leaſt one of thoſe pleaſures, the origin of which we are to enquire into, on this occaſion.

The view of the miſeries of others always is painful to us, when thoſe miſeries are ſuch as ourſelves are equally expos'd to with thoſe whom we ſee ſuffering them; but, on the contrary, we find a ſort of conſolation in looking upon thoſe misfortunes which we ſee others labouring under, and which we are convinc'd, by reaſon and the nature of things, can never fall to our own ſhare. The repreſentation in this caſe gives us pride inſtead of humility, and a peculiar kind of pleaſure inſtead of the common uneaſineſs. The ſource of all our affections on theſe occaſions, is the bringing home to ourſelves, what we ſee repreſented as the fate of others; and we often receive from this, a ſort of comfort in obſerving, that people in thoſe ſtates of life, which are apt to attract our envy, are at times ſubject to misfortunes, which our own more humble ſituation perfectly and ſecurely preſerves us from.

We not only are taught by this leſſon to bear our private misfortunes with more patience, but we congratulate ourſelves on finding that we are, comparatively to the reſt of the world, leſs unhappy than we imagin'd we were.

While the misfortunes of others, however, ſo long as they are greater than our own, comfort

us

us with the reflexion that if we are not more happy than we find ourſelves, we might have eaſily been leſs ſo; it does not follow that we muſt neceſſarily taſte the beauties of the piece, in order to our afflicting ourſelves upon the occaſion of the misfortunes of the principal perſonages of it, when ſelf-love does not find its account in paying them this tribute.

The heroes whom we ſee repreſented as famous for their misfortunes, have been alſo famous for their uncommon virtues; elſe they had not been heroes. The more we are affected by their fortune, the more we ſhew that we underſtand the rank and value of their virtues; and we flatter our own pride in being adequate judges of ſuch exalted greatneſs. In other caſes, a ſenſibility and feeling for the diſtreſſes of our fellow creatures, when it is conducted by the rules of diſcretion, is itſelf a virtue; and we place ourſelves in the claſs of generous and noble ſouls by beſtowing on the illuſtrious unfortunate, that compaſſion which is their due.

It is peculiar to the ſorrow which we expreſs on occaſion of theatrical repreſentations, that we grieve and afflict ourſelves the more willingly in favour of thoſe great and virtuous perſons, who we know beforehand will not long be the objects of this compaſſion; when we know that the melancholy we are indulging, will not be of ſo long a duration as to become troubleſome, but that a happy change in their affairs will ſoon wipe away their miſery, and all the tears that flow for it.

Are we at a new play in ſome degree deceived in this imagination? Does the heroe whoſe fortune we have been compaſſionating thro' the

piece

piece at length fall a ſacrifice to injuſtice or barbarity? we ſet up our ſelves as judges between him and his enemies. It immediately appears to us, that if our ſelves had the choice offer'd us, whether we wou'd periſh like the heroe, or triumph like the murderers, we ſhou'd not heſitate a moment to take the ſuffering part, and we appear great in our own eyes for it.

Perhaps it wou'd be a vain attempt to think of diſtinguiſhing which of theſe ſeveral cauſes moſt powerfully influence us in the pleaſure we evidently take in being melancholy, and in ſhedding real tears at a tragedy. It is not improbable that they have their ſeveral predominancies in different people, and that any one of them becomes the moſt or the leaſt powerful in its effect, according to the natural turn of mind of the perſon it has to act upon. But we ſhall entertain the reader no longer on a diſquiſition, which is at beſt rather curious than important; but paſs to ſome other conſiderations more immediately relative to our ſubject.

What can be the reaſon why ſome players, as is very often found to be the caſe, are ſtrongly affected, when they hear the author read their parts to them, and yet are very cold and lifeleſs when they come to ſpeak them themſelves? And what can be the reaſon of another thing that appears yet more ſtrange, that the very ſame ſcene which wou'd draw tears from them if perform'd by any body elſe, ſhall ſcarce make any impreſſion on them while they play it themſelves?

It ſhould appear that this ſingularity is to be attributed in general to the inactivity and ſluggiſhneſs of theſe players ſouls, which are in themſelves inſenſible to the finer touches of an affecting

ting ſentiment, and can only be mov'd by what pleads to the external ſenſes.

Theſe people are infinitely more ſtruck by the tone of voice, than by the ſenſe that is expreſs'd by it; and are ſcarce at all affected by the ſituation of the perſon who ſpeaks what ſo ſtrongly affects them. They are not to be rouſed, in ſhort, into ſenſibility, except a ſtriking manner of delivery tells them that they ought to be ſo.

There are other perſons in this way of life with whom the odd contrariety we have been ſpeaking of, is to be attributed to quite another origin: Namely, to the natural inclination of their hearts, to a ſtate of freedom and independance; from which principle they are always influenced to perform that much better which is wholly voluntary, than that which they are enjoin'd to do.

Others ſhew all the coldneſs and inſenſibility we are complaining of in their playing, from a much worſe reaſon than either of the former, from their being but very badly acquainted with the ſenſe and meaning of their parts: Theſe have their minds kept in a continual attention to the remembring what they are to ſay next; and as they are wholly taken up with the remembrance of the words, they can never give themſelves up to thoſe emotions, which the part of the character they are repreſenting requires, and by means of which alone, they can pleaſe any body that is worth pleaſing.

Finally, there is yet another cauſe for this worſt of all faults in playing: we mean the terrors of an audience. This principally affects thoſe of the performers, who have not arrived at the happineſs of a general applauſe. With theſe the fear

fear of diſpleaſing that formidable circle the pit, confounds and renders them unable to expreſs even what they feel very juſtly, and have talents to convince us that they do, if they were not thus prevented from exerting them. Theſe players are much in the condition of thoſe boys in a ſchool, who with much merit, as is often the caſe, have much diffidence; and whoſe timid diſpoſitions will not permit them to ſhew their good qualities before a ſevere maſter.

The actreſſes have in general been found to ſuffer more from this ſort of falſe modeſty than the actors. We do not at all underſtand this foible, if we confound it with want of ſpirit; for it often has been the ruin of thoſe who have not been deficient in that great article, but have thro' this miſchievous backwardneſs and timidity, been wholly incapable of exerting it.

The world will allow, that excellent actreſs Mrs. *Pritchard*, is as far as any body from wanting ſpirit; yet how many years did this baſhful folly confine her to the parts of *chambermaids* and the heroines of farces, with all the merit that now makes ſuch a figure about her; and how were we ſurpriz'd, when by ſome good chance ſhe had got the part of *Roſalind* aſſign'd her in the reviv'd play of *As you like it*, to hear her ſpeak with a ſpirit and juſtice, that none of the then favourites of the ſtage cou'd come up to,

'Good my complexion, doſt thou think that 'becauſe I am capariſon'd like a man, I have a 'doublet and hoſe in my diſpoſition—One inch of 'delay more is a *South Sea* diſcovery—I prithee 'tell me who it is quickly, and ſpeak apace—

'I wou'd

'I wou'd thou coud'ſt ſtammer, that thou might'ſt 'pour this conceal'd man out of thy mouth, as 'wine comes out of a narrow neck'd bottle, ei-'ther too much at once, or none at all. I pry-'thee take the cork out of thy mouth, that I 'may drink thy tidings.'

Every ſpeech after this, convinc'd us more and more, that we had been long in poſſeſſion of a jewel that we had ſcandalouſly neglected; till toward the end of the play, her raillery to her lover, who pretended to be dying for her, ſhew'd us fully what ſhe was. *Ex eo Corydon, Corydon eſt tempore nobis.*

With what pleaſure is it that one recollects the circumſtances that diſcovered ſo much merit; that one remembers the manner in which ſhe ſaid,

'No, faith, die by attorney; the poor world 'is almoſt ſix thouſand years old, and in all this 'time there was not a man died in his own per-'ſon, *videlicet*, in a love cauſe: *Troilus* had his 'brains daſh'd out with a *Grecian* club, yet 'he did what he cou'd to die before, and he is 'one of the patterns of love. *Leander* was ano-'ther of them; he wou'd have liv'd many a fair 'year, tho' *Hero* had turn'd Nun, if it had not 'been for a hot midſummer night; for, good 'youth, he went forth to waſh himſelf in the 'Helleſpont, and being taken with the cramp he 'was drown'd; and the fooliſh chroniclers of 'that age found it was for *Hero* of *Seſtos*. But 'theſe are all lies; men have dy'd from time 'to time, and worms have eaten them; but not 'for love.

CHAP. IV.

Players who are naturally amorous, are the only ones who ſhou'd perform the Parts of Lovers upon the Stage.

AN actreſs whoſe perſonal charms had long render'd her celebrated among a ſet of performers, where ſome others might with more juſtice have claim'd the firſt applauſe, had the part of a princeſs aſſign'd her in a new piece, whoſe character was remarkable for a very tender paſſion to a very faithleſs man: She perfectly remember'd the words of her part, but ſhe was by no means able to throw into it that tenderneſs, which the author had meant to characteriſe the lady by.

There are many reaſons why two people of the ſame ſex ſhou'd not have any very great friendſhip for one another while on the ſame ſtage; but all theſe pleaded in vain againſt the generoſity of temper of one of this favourite lady's ſiſter-actreſſes. She was fond of her, and wiſh'd nothing ſo much as to ſee her merit as a player equal to the applauſes which were beſtow'd upon her perſon. She peculiarly wiſh'd to ſee her excell in this new part. She gave her many leſſons upon the ſubject; but they did not produce the intended effect. In fine, the inſtructreſs one day in amazement aſk'd her ſcholar, Dear creature, can there be any real difficulty in what I am taking all this pains to ſet you right in? throw your ſelf out of the perſonated character into real life; ſuppoſe yourſelf the generous tender woman you act, betray'd in the ſame baſe manner: If you were

were to be this moment abandoned by a man whom you tenderly loved, would it not ſtrike you with the moſt ſenſible pain? Would not you be endeavouring by every means in the world?—I! reply'd the lady to whom this diſcourſe was directed! I ſhould certainly be endeavouring to get myſelf another lover as quick as I could. If that be the caſe, reply'd the other, we are both throwing away our time: I am very well ſatisfy'd that you will never play this part as you ought to do.

The conſequence the friend of our actreſs drew from this declaration of the ſtate of her heart, was a very juſt one; the celebrated lady having no other ideas in a love affair than thoſe of intereſt or vanity, was utterly incapable of expreſſing any thing of the tenderneſs and delicacy of that elegant and diſintereſted paſſion.

What is the reaſon that no body ever play'd *Juliet* ſo well as Mrs. *Cibber*, but that Mrs. *Cibber* has a heart better form'd for tenderneſs than any other woman who ever attempted it; and perhaps, in real life, more deſerves the name of a lover than any body of her ſex ever did? It is eaſy to ſee that in all that tenderneſs *Shakeſpear* has put into the mouth of this favourite character, this actreſs is, as ſhe delivers it, glorying in the opportunity of expreſſing her own ſentiments in ſuch elegant language; and 'tis for this reaſon that no body after her will ever be endur'd on the ſame ſtage in that paſſionate ſpeech, wherein ſhe tells *Romeo* from her window,

Thou know'ſt the maſk of night is on my face,
Elſe would a maiden bluſh bepaint my cheek

For

For that which thou haſt heard me ſpeak to
night:
Fain would I dwell on form, fain, fain deny
What I have ſpoke;—but farewel compliment.
Doſt thou love me?—I know thou wilt ſay
aye,
And I will take thy word: yet if thou ſwear'ſt,
Thou may'ſt prove falſe:—at lover's perjuries
They ſay *Jove* laughs.—O gentle *Romeo*,
If thou doſt love, pronounce it faithfully;
Or if you think I am too quickly won,
I'll frown and be perverſe, and ſay thee nay,
So thou wilt woo; but elſe not for the world.
In truth, ſweet *Mountague*, I am too fond,
And therefore thou may'ſt think my 'haviour light:
But truſt me, gentleman, I'll prove more true,
Than thoſe that have more cunning to be ſtrange.

Or in thoſe eager and animated ſpeeches to him afterwards, which indeed, in reading, are very pleaſing; but which are not the thing that ſtrike us to the heart with a tenderneſs for the character, except when ſhe ſpeaks them, ſuch are,

If thou wilt ſwear, ſwear by thy gracious ſelf,
Who art the god of my idolatry,
And I'll believe thee.———
O for a falkner's voice,
To lure this Taſſel-gentle back again.
Bondage is hoarſe, and may not ſpeak aloud,
Elſe would I tear the cave where Eccho lies,
And make her airy tongue more hoarſe than mine,
With repetition of my *Romeo*'s name.
—If that thy bent of love be honourable,
Thy purpoſe marriage, ſend me word to-
morrow;

And

And all my fortunes at thy foot I lay,
And follow thee, my love, throughout the world.

Whoever has heard this actreſs deliver theſe ſpeeches, knows that there is more fondneſs, more real love in them, than in all the pompous declarations of it in a *Satira*, when in the tranſports of an enthuſiaſtic paſſion, ſhe ſays of *Alexander*,

He kiſſes ſofter than a ſouthern wind,
Curls like a vine, and touches like a god.

Or in the eager expreſſion of it in *Hermione*, when *Pyrrhus* apologizes for his own inconſtancy, by telling her, *the man who ne'er was lov'd can ne'er be falſe*; with how much ſpirit and earneſtneſs does Mrs. *Horton* anſwer to this,

Have I not lov'd you then, perfidious man?
For you I ſlighted all the *Grecian* princes;
Forſook my father's houſe, conceal'd my wrongs,
When moſt provok'd would not return to *Sparta*,
In hopes that time might fix your wavering heart.
I lov'd you then, inconſtant; and even now,
Inhuman king, that you pronounce my death,
My heart ſtill doubts, if I ſhould love or hate you.

But with all the energy that accompanies this ſpeech, there appears ſomething wanting in it; we perceive that *Hermione* is very angry, but we do not diſtinguiſh in her that heart-felt paſſion the poet meant ſhe ſhould diſcover in every ſentence, as the ſource of that anger: pride, and an indignation of being forſaken for another, ſeem the reigning paſſions in the character as this lady repre-

repreſents it; tho' it is certain they were never intended to be ſo.

Let us put the merit of Mrs. *Cibber* in this way, in a yet fairer light of compariſon. We remember to have ſeen Mrs. *Ward*, in the character of *Cordelia*, receiv'd with the utmoſt applauſe: *Shakeſpear* has thrown into the mouth of this lady expreſſions, as full of love for *Edgar*, as thoſe he has given to *Juliet* for *Romeo*; perhaps the moſt affecting of thoſe we have juſt quoted from that character, ſcarce equal thoſe in which *Cordelia*, after ſhe has diſcover'd her unhappy lover in his madman's habit, avows her love to him.

Come to my arms, thou deareſt, beſt of men,
And take the kindeſt vows that e'er were ſpoke
By a proteſting maid.
By the dear vital ſtream that bathes my heart,
Theſe hallow'd rags of thine, this naked virtue,
Ridiculous even to the meaneſt clown,
To me are dearer than the richeſt pomp
Of purple monarchs.

We all allow Mrs. *Ward* capable of great expreſſion, and even of great tenderneſs in many caſes; but when we hear theſe paſſionate declarations from her, we cannot but perceive, that ſhe wants that native tenderneſs, that peculiar turn to love in the very heart, which gives Mrs. *Cibber* a ſuperiority in all theſe characters, to whoever did, or perhaps ever will ſpeak them; a ſuperiority which every body has acknowledged, tho' few have known the ſource of.

We will readily allow (ſome body will perhaps obſerve) that people who are themſelves in love,

love, or who are form'd by nature with a tendency to that paſſion, are more proper than others to perform tender and amorous parts; but we cannot ſee why they ſhould be the only ones who are proper for them. To this we ſhall anſwer, that if we will be at the pains of enquiring but a little into the hiſtory of the ſtage, we ſhall find that the higheſt ſcenes of love in our beſt plays have never been ſo expreſſively repreſented as when the actor and actreſs were not only of amorous tempers, but were actually at the time of their playing theſe parts heartily in love with each other. The *Pſyche* of *Moliere*, among the *French*, ow'd its prodigious ſucceſs, at the time when every body ſeem'd mad after it, to this peculiar accident, that all the love which the audience ſuppos'd ſo excellently pretended between the principal characters, was real, and they were ſpeaking their own proper ſentiments to one another, under the advantage of that excellent poet's language.

But are we to conclude from this, and a few other ſuch ſingular inſtances, (our objector will perhaps continue) that becauſe the parts have ſucceeded very well where the perſons who repreſented them were in earneſt, therefore all actors and actreſſes muſt have the ſame paſſions in their hearts, at leaſt in general, if not for one another, in order to their playing the ſame ſort of characters with the like ſucceſs? Muſt a performer have a natural tenderneſs of ſoul, in order to his playing a tender part expreſſively? We ſee every day people of good natural diſpoſitions repreſenting tyrants, and perſons full of cruelty, on the ſtage, with general applauſe; and we have an eminent

eminent inſtance of an actor who is very far from having any thing of the ridiculous turn of the fribbles of the age, in his real character, who yet is able to repreſent them inimitably to us upon the ſtage; nor is it neceſſary for a man to be a ſavage in his nature, in order to his playing with great juſtneſs and expreſſion the *Jew* of *Venice*. Why therefore (he will conclude) may the caſe not ſtand with love, juſt as it does with the other paſſions? and why may not an actor or an actreſs, without being ſuſceptible of all the foibles of that paſſion, repreſent very fairly, very faithfully, and very expreſſively, all its tranſports?

The man who is capable of arguing in this ſtrain, may be aſſur'd that he has never been in love himſelf, and probably has never had an opportunity of ſeeing two people who were ſo: when ſuch a man has obtain'd a true notion of love from experience, he will be ſenſible that whatever may be the caſe in regard to the other paſſions, the expreſſion of this peculiar one is not to be had from art. Whatever attempts the beſt actreſs in the world, who has it not from nature, can make to catch the genuine addreſs, the affecting air and deportment of the truly enamour'd maid, they will be always as different from nature, as the cold pretences of a common creature whom a man purchaſes for the night, are from the paſſionate tenderneſs of a woman who really loves him.

It is at beſt but very imperfectly that the player counterfeits the other paſſions, when he does not really and naturally give himſelf up to them; but they are all leſs imperfectly copied by him, from what he ſees in others, than love can be.

A man will but very badly imitate the tone of voice of a perſon in a rage, if his own blood is perfectly cool and calm at the time; but he may take in other aſſiſtances, and borrow from nature ſome of the other ſigns by which that paſſion generally manifeſts itſelf; and nothing is more certain, than that ſeveral of the modern actors, in ſome of their beſt parts, have this trick of deceiving the eyes of their audience, when they have not merit enough in the character to pleaſe their ears. The player in this caſe ſaves himſelf, by addreſſing his art to one of the ſenſes, when he is ſenſible he cannot do his buſineſs by the other. But this reſource is wholly loſt in love: when that is the paſſion to be repreſented, the player can no more deceive the eyes than he can the other ſenſes of his audience, if nature has not given him a ſoul form'd to receive the paſſion.

The truth of this principle may be evinc'd without giving the objector the trouble of much reflection: nay, we ſhall perhaps be led, whether we will or not, merely by obſerving facts, to acknowledge, that an actor and an actreſs who play together a ſcene where the two characters they repreſent are deſperately in love with one another, can never execute their parts with any degree of perfection, if they do not really feel in their own hearts, at leaſt for that inſtant, all the tenderneſs, all the tranſports for one another, that the perſons they repreſent are endowed with by the poet.

In effect, if it were not neceſſary in order to the doing juſtice to ſuch a ſcene, that the performers mutually feel the ſentiments for each other which the poet deſcribes in their ſeveral parts, at leaſt for the moment while they are playing them,

why

why is it that we ſee an actreſs appear ſo very different from herſelf when ſhe plays ſuch a part, and has the man ſhe really loves for her pretended admirer; and when ſhe plays the ſame part without this advantage? or why is it that we ſee the very beſt of our actors, and thoſe in particular who, under proper circumſtances, ſucceed beſt of all in love-ſcenes, yet make nothing of it when the character to whom they are to pay their addreſſes is given to ſome female performer, who, from her age or figure, is wholly incapable of charming them?

If it is not ſufficiently evident from this, that not only a man muſt be capable of, and form'd for love, in his private character, but muſt even be capable of taking it up occaſionally, in order to play the part of a lover well, we may yet add a third queſtion, Why is it that a tender love-ſcene, tho' ever ſo well apply'd on both ſides, is yet perfectly cold and inſipid to us, when the perſon who repreſents the lover, is a woman in the habit of the other ſex? Is it not evidently from the perſuaſion we are under, that the tenderneſs that character expreſſes, is all affected and forced, from the natural impoſſibility of one woman's feeling for another all that paſſion which ſhe is to repreſent to us in the ſcene?

If we would know the reaſon, why it is poſſible for the player to borrow the appearances of the other paſſions, without being naturally poſſeſſed of them; and yet impoſſible for him, unleſs he can love himſelf, to copy, with any degree of ſucceſs, the tranſports of that tender affection of the ſoul, we may venture to propoſe the following conjecture on the ſubject.

The other affections of the heart paint themſelves no otherwiſe on the face than by making an alteration in ſome of its traces; but love, (and the ſame may in ſome meaſure be ſaid of joy) has the evident privilege of giving new graces, new beauties to the countenance; and of concealing, or even, for the time, amending its defects. Tho' a player, therefore, is able to repreſent to us a tolerably perfect image at leaſt, of any other paſſion, without, in reality, ſubmitting himſelf to its government; yet it does not follow, that he can by the ſame means imitate, even tho' it were but imperfectly, the joyous intoxication of Love, without his being truly affected by it himſelf.

It would be expecting impoſſibilities to require, that in every tender ſcene that is to be repreſented on the ſtage, the two perſons who perform'd the enamour'd parts ſhould always be, in reality, in love with one another: as to this we only know, that when this is the caſe, we have the advantage of ſeeing the ſcene much better play'd than it can be under any other circumſtances; but we are to wiſh, in general, that both performers could always take up the paſſion, for the moment their parts require them; and that, if it be only aſſumed for the occaſion, it may appear as ſtrongly as poſſible: they will never make even the lighteſt impreſſion upon us, if they have not at leaſt a natural inclination for the paſſion in itſelf, whatever they may have for the perſon whom chance has thrown into their way for the preſent imaginary object of it. It is as impoſſible for us to make a perſon, on whom youth, beauty, and accompliſhments in woman have no power in real life, to borrow the extaſies, the tranſporting frenzy, and all the gay delights that attend that paſſion from what he

ſees

ſees in others, as to make the dark and melancholy night expreſs the brightneſs of the fineſt day.

CHAP. V.

Which is a corollary to the foregoing Chapter.

SINCE a natural diſpoſition to love and tenderneſs is a neceſſary requiſite for playing the character of a lover to advantage, it is very evident that no actor ought to attempt parts of this kind, if he be paſt that period of his age in which loving would be proper in real life. The remembering our paſt impreſſions will never prove ſufficient for our expreſſing them as if preſent: 'tis in vain, on this occaſion, that we call back what we once were in our thoughts, when the warmth and activity of our blood gave the paſſions a command over us that we now no longer acknowledge. Theſe ideas, when our juices are become cold and frozen, ſcarce able to creep along their paſſages, ſeem but the remembrance of a pleaſant dream; and can never awaken in us again thoſe ſoft tranſports that were our happineſs while they were in their perfection. In order to their producing this effect upon us, it is neceſſary that the objects of our paſſion appear to us ſuch as they did at that time; but how is this poſſible, when we have no longer the ſame eyes to view them with? It is the unlucky circumſtance of human life, on this occaſion, that the more we loſe the right of being difficult to pleaſe, the nicer we become on that head; and as we deſerve leſs, we expect more.

In this ſituation, what means are there by which an actor and an actreſs can transform themſelves, according to our deſires or expectations, or according to the neceſſity the author has laid them under, into a pair of lovers, who believe that they ſee in the object of their adoration every thing that nature has created perfect or amiable in the ſex. Independently of what the players, in the latter part of their lives, want in the warmth of their hearts and inclinations, beſide that they neither ſee with the ſame eyes, nor are capable of being affected in the ſame ſenſible manner that they would have been while younger, they ought to remember, that they will aſſuredly be in the ſame ſort of aukward perplexity in performing on the ſtage the characters of amorous people, that they would be in, if what they are pretending were a reality. They will ſpeak the language of love to a ſuppos'd miſtreſs ſo much the more faintly, as they are ſenſible they ſhould do it were they in real life, and repeating the courtſhip of their younger days. They cannot but be ſenſible that they ſhould not in the latter caſe be able to perſwade; and they will never find it poſſible to take up, in the former, the deportment and tone of voice, and the thouſand niceties of ſenſation and expreſſion, by means of which they might have hoped to ſucceed in a more proper time of life.

SECT.

SECTION the SECOND.

Of thoſe Qualifications which, when they fall to the Share of that Claſs of Actors ſpoken of in the Second Book, peculiarly intereſt the Senſes of an Audience.

CHAP. I.

That Sort of Voice which may be very adequate to certain Characters, may be by no means ſufficient for the Actor, in Parts by which we are to be peculiarly moved and affected.

WE ſhould not fail to think it an abſurd and ridiculous attempt in any man who ſhould bring himſelf before us on the ſtage, be it in tragedy or in comedy, without adequate organs for the performance of what we expect from every one who comes there, who ſhould perſwade himſelf, that he could be underſtood without being heard; and that an audience would patiently open their ears to hear the dumb ſpeak, or ſit down to ſee thoſe ſcenes, into which they know the author has thrown every ornament that wit, ſpirit and genius could give them, ſink in the repreſentation into the cold ſtupidity of pantomimes. Provided, however, that the actors in comedy do but take care to expreſs themſelves ſo diſtinctly, and articulately, that they do not let us loſe a ſyllable of what the author puts into their mouths, we, in many caſes, very readily paſs over the want of a fine tone, or the elegancies of a good voice.

Perhaps it may be even eſtabliſh'd as a rule, that it is not to the advantage of the Actor in comedy to have too full and ſonorous a voice. The uſe of this in tragedy, all the world is acquainted with; but as whatever the voice gains in fullneſs, it loſes in ſwiftneſs; and as to ſpeak quick, yet articulately, is the great merit, in many caſes, in comedy; a ſwift and manageable voice, ready for every turn of expreſſion, is the moſt of all to be wiſh'd for, in the actor who has theſe parts aſſign'd him. The perſons who would ſucceed in tragedy, on the contrary, have occaſion for a voice that is ſtrong, majeſtic, and pathetic. Comedy, even when the author means that we ſhould be touch'd by it ſomewhat in the manner of tragedy, is yet intended to give us but a ſlight ſenſation of this kind; and therefore it requires but little of this aſſiſtant energy: We expect, on the other hand, from tragedy, the moſt ſtrong and violent emotions; and to produce theſe, we always require ſonorous voices in the principal characters engag'd in ſcenes where there is room to raiſe them. It is abſolutely neceſſary, therefore, to the ſucceſs of tragedy, that the voice of the perſons who perform the capital parts in it be proper, at the ſame time to command the attention, to impreſs a ſort of reverence on the audience, and to raiſe the greateſt emotions in their hearts; that it be ſuch as can give all the ſtrength and vigour to the vehemence of the paſſions, that the author could wiſh in them; all the noble majeſty that he intended in the expreſſion of his moſt elevated ſentiments; and where an affecting ſorrow is to be delivered, that it have all that eloquent energy that is neceſſary to ſtrike, to ſeize upon, to penetrate the very

very hearts of an audience. It is not enough, on theſe occaſions, that it raiſe our paſſions, it muſt tranſport and raviſh us: it is not enough that it impoſe, it muſt ſubdue and work us entirely to the author's purpoſe: 'tis not enough that it touch the heart, it muſt pierce it to the utmoſt depth.

Where an actreſs, to whom nature has given but a feeble voice, plays the character of a *Statira*, or an *Hermione*, we are apt to fancy, that we hear the utmoſt thunder of a full chorus of an Oratorio play'd upon a dancing-maſter's kit. What contempt muſt ſo unnatural a ſcene inſpire us with; and, on the other hand, what an impreſſion do we feel from a part of this kind, work'd up by the author's art ſo as to move the paſſions of an audience in the utmoſt degree; and, to this, play'd by an actreſs in the bloom of life, and pride of voice and beauty, whoſe victorious accents might have made it natural in a *Lothario* to become conſtant, or in an *Altamont* to be unfaithful?

Thoſe actors who, in comedy, are to repreſent even people of rank and condition, are not indeed under a neceſſity of having a majeſtic voice; but it is requiſite that they have an eaſy and a graceful one. It is in regard to the voice, juſt as it is with the figure of perſons of quality and conſequence, when repreſented on the ſtage. There is a ſort of voice, by the modulations of which we are able to judge, if we hear a perſon ſpeak, tho' we do not ſee him, that he is above the common rank of mankind: this ought to be a diſtinction always preſerv'd to us upon the ſtage. Unqueſtionably, in the real world, nature deals with the people of birth and

faſhion no better than with thoſe who want theſe accidental preeminences; and perſons of the greateſt quality are no more ſure of always having a better voice, than a better figure than other people: but when the poet propoſes to himſelf to repreſent ſuch perſons on the ſtage, he is to take the beſt models he can find to form his reſemblances from; and the players are to act in concert with him in this, and to give us copies of ſuch original sonly, as are in every reſpect the beſt form'd by nature for the rank they are plac'd in.

The voice of the comedian ought to be noble, when he plays the part of a perſon of rank and quality; and it ought to be intereſting and affecting, when he performs in character of a lover. The force which a tender ſentiment receives from a judicious modulation of voice, or an expreſſive accent, is more ſtriking than all that it can have from the ſtrongeſt expreſſion, or the utmoſt energy. Diſcourſe makes no impreſſion on the heart, otherwiſe than by means of the underſtanding; but there is ſomething in an elegant command of the voice which ſtrikes immediately, and of itſelf, nor waits for the heart's receiving any notice from the ſenſe of what it delivers. There are ſome people whoſe organs of voice are ſo favour'd by nature in their conſtruction, that they have a ſecret power of moving our affections, even when we are not able to adapt any determinate idea at all to the ſounds that proceed from them; and we are, in real life, often more affected by the complaints of a perſon who delivers them in a language wholly unknown to us, than we ſhould have been by any thing he would have been able to ſay to us,

if

if he had ſpoke in a language we were both acquainted with, but with a leſs perſwaſive accent.

It is ſufficient, in comedy, that the voice of the actor, who plays the part of a lover, be an engaging and an intereſting one; but more is requir'd in that of the actreſs; this ought to be a raviſhing, an enchanting one. We expect from her all that perſwaſive accent, all that engaging tone of voice, by means of which ſhe can do what ſhe will with her audience, and obtain every thing ſhe has a mind to from her admirer. The charms of a fine voice may ſtand in the place of a great many other advantages: we frequently find the teſtimonies of our ears carrying us beyond thoſe of our other ſenſes; and many a woman, who has appear'd indifferent to us when we have only ſeen her, has charm'd us, has commanded our utmoſt adoration when we have heard her ſpeak.

An elocution of this kind is not, indeed, neceſſary to thoſe actreſſes who perform the other parts in comedy; but they muſt, at leaſt, have a voice that does not ſhock or hurt the ear. A woman cannot be deſtitute of any one grace without our being depriv'd, by that means, of at leaſt one kind of pleaſure when we ſee her on the ſtage; and the more they ſeem form'd to excite in us only the agreeable, the pleaſurable ſenſations, the leſs are we able to pardon in them their producing what is contrary to ſuch an expectation. Sweetneſs of voice is one of the common accompliſhments of women; and we are ready to quarrel with nature for having cheated us of our right, when we hear harſh ſounds proceed from delicate lips.

CHAP. II.

An Audience expects to find in the Perſon who acts the Part of a Lover, in Comedy, an amiable figure; and in him who acts the Part of a Hero in Tragedy, a majeſtic and ſtriking one.

THE elevated ſentiments of a princeſs may, in ſome caſes, make her overlook the imperfections in the face and figure of the hero who enjoys her love, on occaſion of his exalted merit, and ſuperior virtues. According to this principle, while a tragic actor ſhall appear only in the parts of thoſe lovers or huſbands with whoſe character his age and figure are not incompatible, we have no right to quarrel with him for being ten years leſs young, or a few inches leſs tall than the man who acts a *Pyrrhus*, or an *Alexander*.

It is odd that we ſhould be more rigid and ſevere in this caſe, in regard to the performers in comedy; but if we will impartially examine our hearts, we ſhall find that we evidently are ſo. As comedy preſents us with nothing that is vaſtly above the common ſphere, in the ſentiments, or in the actions of the characters it gives us, we are never able to perſuade ourſelves that the heroes in theſe plays are form'd for triumphing over the hearts of the ladies they court, without charming their eyes; nor that the ladies are of ſuch elevated ſentiments, as not to conſult a little with thoſe organs about the ſacrifice which they are going to make of their hearts.

Except, therefore, where the author has meant to figure to us a ridiculous and abſurd paſſion, we always

always expect, not only that the figure and perſon of the lover be not contradictory to the emotions the lady is to feel for him, but that it be elegant enough to juſtify to us the paſſion ſhe has conceived for him; which as we are to eſteem, not to ridicule, we expect to ſee well plac'd, and adequate to the merit of the object. It is not enough that the actreſs deſcribes to us, with all the beauty of expreſſion, the paſſion ſhe is to be poſſeſs'd of in her character: we expect to find that it is probable ſhe ſhould be as much in love with the man as ſhe tells us ſhe is; and that we may have room to praiſe the playing of the actreſs, without blaming the bad taſte of the lady in her love.

We have already quoted ſome of the tender expreſſions in the part of *Juliet*, as play'd by Mrs. *Cibber*, as of the number of the higheſt beauties of the *Engliſh* ſtage: we are ſenſible how much the poet owes to the actreſs on theſe occaſions; and we may add, as to this particular inſtance, that it is not a ſmall ſhare of the applauſe that this excellent performer receives in them, that is owing to the graceful perſon of the player who acts *Romeo*. Let us imagine all the merit in that lady that ſhe has always ſhewn us in this part; and let us ſuppoſe that Mr. *Ray*, or Mr. *Arthur*, with all the merit of Mr. *Barry* in ſpeaking and deportment, were to play the character of her lover: we cannot but allow that the abſurdity of a fine young creature, fixing her inclinations in ſo violent a manner on ſuch very inadequate objects, would riſe in judgment with us againſt all the merit of her tenderneſs and expreſſion: we ſhould loſe the ſenſe of her paſſion, to laugh at her abſurdity, when we heard her

wiſhing

wiſhing for the time of her lover's returning to her, with all the warmth of imagination which *Shakeſpear* has thrown into that ſoliloquy,

Gallop apace, ye firey-footed ſteeds,
To Phœbus' manſion —— Such a charioteer
As Phaeton would whip ye to the weſt,
And bring in cloudy night immediately.
Spread thy cloſe curtain, love-performing night,
To hood-wink jealous eyes; and Romeo
Leap to theſe arms, untalk'd of and unſeen.
Give me my Romeo, and when he ſhall die,
Take him and cut him out in little ſtars,
And he will make the face of heaven ſo fine,
That all the world ſhall be in love with night,
And pay no worſhip to the gaudy ſun.

All the ſpirit and feeling that Mrs. *Cibber* throws into this ſpeech appears natural, when we ſee ſo fine a fellow as *Barry* for the object of it; but ſhould we ſee ſuch a *Romeo* as we have juſt mention'd, it would ſhock and diſtaſte, inſtead of charming us.

We know indeed, when we come to reflect, that players are but the repreſenters of paſſions, not the people who really are figur'd to us as feeling them; but we want the illuſion to be kept up as well as it can be, and we would be taught to forget this circumſtance, if poſſible, till the play is over.

We remember a little *Juliet*, of very conſiderable merit, at the *Hay-Market*; and nothing is more certain, than that ſhe would have appear'd, even with the ſame ſhare of genius and accompliſhments, much more pleaſing than ſhe did, if there had been ſome gay young fellow for her lover, inſtead

inſtead of a perſon whom we could not but remember, at every ſentence ſhe deliver'd concerning him, to be too old for her choice, too little handſome to be in love with, and, into the bargain, her father.

To change the ſcene, let us conſider the ſame advantages and diſadvantages in regard to the other ſex. What actor in the world can ſpeak his love, his adoration to Mrs. *Hale*, with the ſame force and feeling that he could to Miſs *Bellamy*? Or even ſuppoſing he could, how very differently would the audience be affected, by the probability join'd with the expreſſion, in the one caſe, and the unnatural and abſurd condition in the other.

Mr. *Ryan* has an uncommon claim to our applauſe in the part of *Oreſtes*; but tho' always well receiv'd in it, he ſeldom commands ſo much of it as he deſerves. The reaſon is evident: Mrs. *Horton*, tho' an actreſs of conſiderable merit in many things, is an unnatural *Hermione*. We ſee the lover deſpairing, raging, nay, even mad for this inconſtant miſtreſs, whom he purſues againſt his reaſon, againſt every thing, even while he ſees her doating on another: what is his motive for this? there appears no other but the beauty of *bright Helen's daughter*? Let him, for heaven's ſake then, for the future, have a handſome, a blooming actreſs to inſpire all this in him. If Mrs. *Woffington* were *Hermione*, with all her faults, we ſhould not think it at all unnatural in her lover to tell his friend, who talks of his having determin'd to forget her,

O, I deceiv'd myſelf.
Do not upbraid th' unhappy man that loves thee,

——When her father,
Great *Menelaus*, gave away his daughter,
His lovely daughter, to this happy *Pyrrhus*,
Th' avenger of his wrongs, thou ſaw'ſt my grief,
My torture, my deſpair; and how I drag'd,
From ſea to ſea, a heavy chain of woes.
—When in the midſt of my diſaſtrous fate
I thought how the divine *Hermione*,
Deaf to my vows, regardleſs of my plaints,
Gave up herſelf, and all her charms to *Pyrrhus*,
Thou may'ſt remember I abhor'd her name,
Strove to forget her, and repay her ſcorn.
I made my friends, and even myſelf believe
My ſoul was freed! alas, I did not ſee
That all the malice of my heart was love.

What propriety, what juſtice does there appear in all the ſtrength and energy with which this player delivers this, when there is nothing in the lady to command ſuch an unconquerable paſſion, when the poet gives us nothing but her beauty for it, and when the managers will not allow us that. We judge it very poſſible for Mr. *Rich* to find as good an *Andromache* as Mrs. *Woffington*; and ſuppoſing that ſhe had not half the merit that ſhe really has in tragedy in general, and that her voice was ten times leſs adapted to the fury of this part than it really is, we are confident her figure alone would give a new turn to the whole play, if employ'd in the character of *Hermione*. *Pyrrhus* is a grave man, and may be ſuppos'd to have forſaken the Grecian princeſs, for other charms in *Andromache* beſide thoſe of a face alone; but *Oreſtes* ſeems to hint at nothing but the *beauty* of *Hermione* through his whole part: and we are apt to believe that the ſpeech, which, tho'

ſpoken.

ſpoken ſenſibly enough, ſits very ill upon him as it is, in the beginning of the ſecond act, would appear with a new face, ſpoken in the very ſame tone and accent, if Mrs. *Woffington* ſtood in the place of the other lady.

Madam, you know my weakneſs; 'tis my fate
To love unpity'd—to deſire to ſee you,
And ſtill to ſwear each time ſhall be the laſt.
My paſſion breaks thro' my repeated oaths,
And every time I ſee you I am perjur'd.
Even now I find my wounds bleed all afreſh;
I bluſh to own it, but I know no cure.
I call the gods to witneſs I have try'd
Whatever man cou'd do, but try'd in vain,
To wear you from my mind. Thro' ſtormy ſeas
And ſavage climes, in a whole year of abſence,
I courted dangers, and I long'd for death.

As would alſo that, in which, on that cunning creature's ſoothing his paſſion, in order to make him the ſlave of her faithleſs purpoſes, he in a moment forgets every inſult, every abuſe he had receiv'd from her, and exclaims in tranſport,

O joy! O extaſy! my ſoul's intranc'd!
O charming princeſs! O tranſcendent maid!
My utmoſt wiſh—thus, thus let me expreſs
My boundleſs thanks! I never was unhappy!

Unnatural as this appears to us, as the play is at preſent acted, and as it muſt appear if ſpoken with the eloquence of an angel under the ſame circumſtances, we are certain it would have all the beauties of juſt playing, if ſpoken in the very ſame manner, and the object only chang'd.

We

We flatter ourſelves that nobody will be ſo unjuſt to us, as to underſtand that we are aiming invectives againſt the perſon of Mrs. *Horton* in this place, or againſt the talents of the other players, ſince in the courſe of this work a ſtrict impartiality is determin'd to be obſerv'd. We cannot ſuppoſe it a fault in this lady, that ſhe is paſt five and twenty; nor in Mr. *Uſher*, that he is not able to ſpeak the elder brother in *Comus* ſo well as Mr. *Garrick* would have done it. There are characters enough on the *Engliſh* ſtage, for which every kind of actor and actreſs is fit. What we are cenſuring is the conduct of the managers of the houſes, who cannot, or who will not ſee the abſurdity of giving ſuch parts to ſuch perſons.

It has been with ſome degree of juſtice obſerv'd, on the other hand, on this occaſion, that it is the ſituation and circumſtances of the character, and not the perſon of the actor, wherein we are principally intereſted in theſe ſcenes; and therefore, that our underſtandings, and not our eyes, are to be the judges of them: that we frequently ſee, in real life, the fineſt women of the age ſighing for the moſt diſagreeable fellows that one could, perhaps, pick out of the whole herd of mankind; and that oddities, or ſeeming abſurdities of this ſort, ought not to offend us on the ſtage, when we find that they are common off it. We need only anſwer to this, that poſſibly, on reflection, we might be able to reconcile ourſelves to this ſort of repreſentation; but we are to remember that reflection is not our buſineſs at a comedy, nor would we have the pleaſure we are to receive at theſe entertaining repreſentations depend on a ſerious and attentive thought.

If

If when the character to be repreſented naturally ſuppoſes the charms of perſon in the performer, it is abſolutely neceſſary that the actor ſhould be able to pleaſe that part of his audience which have no other means of being affected but by the eyes, as well as thoſe who have ears and underſtandings. This condition is yet vaſtly more eſſential to the actreſſes who play the parts of thoſe ladies whom the poet has made the objects of love, and repreſented as worthy to be belov'd and admir'd. It is not only a good face and a regular ſhape that is neceſſary for them on theſe occaſions; beauty alone will not anſwer the purpoſe: 'tis ſomething that goes infinitely farther than beauty which they ought to be poſſeſs'd of; ſomething that exerts its influence more generally and more powerfully over the heart; 'tis that *je-ne-ſçais-quoi*, by means of which one woman appears charming, while the want of it renders a thouſand others handſome in vain; 'tis that victorious agent, which is as certain always to take place, as never to be deſcrib'd or defin'd.

While we in this manner require, that the performers in comedy have all thoſe elegancies of perſon that we ſhould expect to find in the happieſt lovers in real life, who had nothing but their perſonal charms to recommend them; we alſo expect in every performer, who is to appear in a character to which the author has given a title and ſentiments above the vulgar, an outſide which may not diſgrace the qualities within; ſuch a perſon, indeed, as we ſhould think ought to be connected with ſuch accompliſhments.

Tho' nature does not always proportion her endowments, either of mind or perſon, to the rank and ſtation of life which people are born to;

to; and we find often, a very deſpicable perſon accompanying a very high title; we cannot reconcile ourſelves to this diſproportion of things upon the ſtage; we muſt always have a repugnance to the ſeeing an actor of a mean figure attempt the character of a perſon of the firſt quality.

We ſhould be yet more diſpleas'd at ſeeing ſuch a performer enter in the character of ſome heroic general, or mighty monarch in tragedy; he would appear to us not to perform his part, but to burleſque or turn it into traveſtie. We can hardly recollect an impropriety of this kind on our own ſtage which has any right to ſtand in competition with one on the *French* theatre, the managers of which have been ſome years ago ſo ſtruck with an incident owing to this ſort of diſproportion between the figure of the actor and the imaginary one of the heroe, that they preſerve the remembrance of it as an eternal rule for the better adapting ſuch parts for the future. A young performer on that ſtage, who had all the grand requiſites of the mind to the forming a maſterly player; who had ſenſibility, fire, and an excellent underſtanding; but with all theſe, a figure very ill cut out for the repreſenting a heroe, would attempt the character of *Mithridates*: he play'd it in ſuch a manner that his audience would have been all charm'd with him, if they had been all blind; but unluckily, in ſpite of all his merit, the diſagreeableneſs of his perſon prejudic'd the whole houſe againſt him; and, in one of the ſcenes where a princeſs who is with him, perceiving ſome uncommon emotion in his face, tells him, *You change countenance*; a pleaſant fellow cry'd out from among the ſpectators,

O!

O! let him! let him by all means! In a moment all the merit of the actor was loſt and bury'd, and the audience thought of nothing, during the remainder of the performance, but of the diſproportion between his perſon and the character he repreſented.

Every actor in a tragedy ought to have a noble and majeſtic figure; the nature of this ſpecies of the drama requires, that every thing about it carry the air of grandeur: there are in tragedy, indeed, ſubordinate characters, but there are no ſubaltern, no low ones, as in comedy: it admits of humble friends or confidents, but then theſe are the confidents of princes and of heroes, and ſhare with them the danger and the glory of governing kingdoms, or of forming the ſchemes of the moſt heroic actions. It is therefore neceſſary that the figure of every actor in this way, even of thoſe who have the ſmalleſt, the leaſt important parts aſſign'd them, ſhould agree with the dignity of their characters, not with the length of their ſpeeches, or the importance of the ſhare they chance to bear in the action; and that they be ſuch men as we may, without abſurdity, ſuppoſe the perſons they repreſent to have been.

It is abſolutely neceſſary that thoſe who play the capital parts in tragedy ſhould have majeſtic and ſtriking figures, fit for every noble enterprize the poet for the night may think proper to put into their characters: and it is not only requiſite that we ſee in them that majeſty of air and deportment as well as figure, by which ſuperior ſouls are generally underſtood to be deſcribed to us, but it is alſo neceſſary that there be a ſedate compoſure in their countenance, that few but thoſe of very elevated minds ever attain to.

The

The whole buſineſs of comedy being to divert and entertain us, it is not wonderful that the very nature of the performance baniſhes from it every thing that would tend to oppoſe the pleaſure it aims to promote; and terror being one of the impreſſions which it is the peculiar privilege of tragedy to excite in us, one might be apt to be ſurpriz'd that it ſhould require in the perſons who are to perform in it a figure which might ſeem, at firſt ſight, as much as any thing could be, contrary to the nature of ſuch an intent. Two eaſy reflections will let us into the ſecret of all this ſeeming contradiction: tragedy may, on many occaſions, repreſent to us cruel, nay barbarous and ſavage actions of the perſons who make a principal figure in the piece; but then theſe are always the effect of ſome violent tranſport of rage, not of a temper in the perſon naturally brutal. We are very willing that the heroes in tragedy ſhould be culpable, but we would always have them be criminal with great excuſes, and as it were in ſpite of themſelves: we expect that even in the very act of delivering themſelves up to the ill, they ſhould preſerve a kind of love and reverence for the good; and that they be led on artfully to the precipice, not that they plunge themſelves voluntarily headlong into it.

The murder of *Deſdemona* by *Othello*, is one of the moſt brutal things done by the heroe of a play that we have an inſtance of; but with what a judicious care does the author excuſe it in this unhappy man, by the thouſand circumſtances that he contrives to lead to it, and how nicely has he diſtinguiſhed between the ſavage fury of a bravo, and the juſt reſentment of an unoffending, injur'd huſband, by making him in love with her even at the moment

ment that he is about to deſtroy her. Whoever will *look into* the following paſſages with this view, will find great reaſon to be ſatisfy'd with the conduct of this ſcene of revenge, ſavage and brutiſh as it is in the period; I ſay, whoever will *look into them in his cloſet* will find this; for the judgment of the people who prepare and cut plays for the actors is not quite enough to lead them to comprehend the neceſſity of ſome of thoſe things which aſſiſt in the palliating the circumſtances in this manner, ſo that we do not hear them on the ſtage.

When *Iago* has by his cunning rais'd the jealouſy of the heroe to that pitch that he ſeems certain of his wife's crime, his reſentment burſts out not againſt her, but the ſuppos'd villain who had wrong'd him with her,

I would have him nine years a killing,

we expect ſome horrible threat next againſt the lady, but he melts into tenderneſs, and only ſays,

A fine woman! a fair woman! a ſweet woman!

and 'tis with difficulty that *Iago*, who anſwers, *Nay, you muſt forget that*, is able to conjure up any other thoughts in him. This is one of thoſe ſoothing paſſages which ſhew how much againſt the nature of the heroe is the crime he is afterwards to commit; and it is one of the many of the ſame kind ſtruck out by the *prompters* from his part.

Immediately after this, when he exclaims in the violence of his rage,

Aye,

Aye, let them rot and periſh.——Let her be damn'd to night;
She ſhall not live;—my heart is turn'd to ſtone.

he immediately melts again, and adds,

—Oh! the world has not a ſweeter creature;
She might lie by an emperor's ſide, and command him taſks:
Oh! ſhe will ſing the ſavageneſs out of a bear,—
And then of ſo gentle a condition.——The pity of it, *Iago*,
O! the pity of it!——

The poet glorioufly contrives to make even the natural temper of his heroe aſſiſt in the taking off from the brutality of the action he is to be guilty of.

What can we expect of a worthy man, convinc'd of his belov'd wife's pretended adultery, but death as the puniſhment?

When we hear the impetuoſity of rage burſt forth againſt the ſuppoſed adulterer,

O that the ſlave had forty thouſand lives;
One is too poor, too weak for my revenge.

what are we to expect but the vows of vengeance againſt the other criminal, as we find them follow,

Now do I ſee it's true; look here, *Iago*,
All my fond love thus do I blow to heaven.
Ariſe, black vengeance, from the hollow hell!
Yield up, oh love, thy crown, and hearted throne
To tyrannous hate! ſwell, boſom, with the fraught,
For 'tis of aſpicks' tongues.—O! blood, blood, blood!

When

When the ſubtle accuſer of the lady works the deluded man up to a reſolution of never ſtoping till he has done the ſuppos'd juſtice he intends, by hinting to him that *his mind may change*, how nobly is the character kept up by the anſwer,

Never, *Iago*. Like to the *Pontick* ſea,
Whoſe icy current and compulſive force,
Ne'er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on,
To the *Propontick* and the *Helleſpont*:
Even ſo my bloody thoughts with violent pace
Shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love,
'Till that a capable and wide revenge
Swallow them up.

How natural, nay, how excuſable does all this fury appear, under the circumſtances in which the author has repreſented it; and how artful is his conduct in binding him immediately after by a ſolemn vow to do what muſt be done, tho' it was ſo very improper for the character of a heroe to perform it. We ſee *Shakeſpear* in this noble inſtance throwing the cruelty of the action that was to be committed, upon the provok'd and artfully-rais'd vengeance of the huſband; and this ſo judiciouſly, that we could ſcarce have accuſed him of ſinking into brutality, had *Deſdemona* fallen by his hand at that inſtant: But this was not enough for *Shakeſpear*; how glorioufly has he reconciled us to the heroe's acting it, by making him even tender and affectionate in the inſtant he is about to do it, repreſenting it to himſelf as an act of juſtice, not a brutal revenge,

She muſt die, elſe ſhe'll betray more men.
Put out the light, and then——

Put out *the* light!—if I quench thee, thou flaming miniſter,
I can again thy former light reſtore,
Should I repent me:—but once put out *thy* light,
Thou cunning'ſt pattern of excelling nature,
I know not where is that *Promethean* heat
That can thy light relumine.
When I have pluck'd the roſe
I cannot give it vital growth again,
It needs muſt wither: I'll ſmell it on the tree;
O balmy breath, that doſt almoſt perſuade
Juſtice to break her ſword.
Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee
And love thee after.
I muſt weep,—but they are cruel tears;
This ſorrow's heavenly,—it ſtrikes where it does love.

Whatever horror and brutality there may be in the act itſelf of killing an innocent wife, the author has here perfectly reconciled it to the character of a heroe, by his conduct of the circumſtances that occaſion it, and that lead to it. It is evidently againſt the inclination of his heart that *Othello* does it; and even while we ſee him about it, we do not know whether he or *Deſdemona* be moſt to be pitied.

We have dwelt the longer on this inſtance, as ſingly ſufficient to give rules to all future writers in this critical circumſtance; and we ſhall add, that this ſort of conduct is neceſſary in the player as well as in the author, that where the one omits it in his looks, the other has in vain put it into his words, and that where the author has been too negligent in his preparations

tions for, and alleviations of it, it is in the power of ſuch an actor as the man we moſt admire in this part, to be of infinite aſſiſtance to him in ſupplying all by the help of his deportment. All this however is not enough for our ſatisfaction on this ſubject; we are never content with heroes, unleſs we can fancy to ourſelves that we read it in their faces that they were born to ſee all their deſires, all their inclinations ſatisfy'd; and unleſs the right which we perſuade ourſelves, from their appearance, they have to be happy, excuſes them in the attempting to triumph over every obſtacle to their ſucceſs, whatever means it may be neceſſary to uſe in accompliſhing it.

CHAP. III.

Of the real or apparent conformity there ought to be between the age of the actor, and that of the perſon repreſented.

A Portrait, tho' ever ſo valuable for the correctneſs of the deſign and the ſtrength and beauty of the colouring, will always be cenſur'd, and that with reaſon, if it repreſents the perſon it is done for as older than he really is; and in the ſame manner the player, tho' a perfect maſter of his profeſſion, will in many caſes only give us a half pleaſure if he appears too old for the character he aſſumes for the night, even tho' he repreſents it ever ſo accurately. It is not ſufficient that the managers of a play-houſe do not give us a wrinkled *Eudoſia* or a *Varanes* with grey hairs, we expect that they ſhould repreſent thoſe characters to us with all the advantages of youth and beauty.

This obſervation is not however of univerſal force: the actor who has many years more upon his head than the author has choſen to beſtow upon the character he repreſents, may under ſome circumſtances give us even more pleaſure than if he were exactly at the ſame period of life: this is moſt happily done in comedy by means of that addreſs which we have ſeen in ſome of our modern players (at the ſame time that they play with great elegance, force, and juſtice) of ſinking the diſparity between their age and that of the character, and giving us the pleaſure of what we are ſenſible is a double eluſion. There is ſcarce a greater merit in a player than this maſterly artifice well apply'd; but when any imperfection appears in it, when the countenance of the performer does not throughout keep date, inſtead of his own time of life, with that of the character he acts, we feel no pleaſure in the repreſentation, and the beſt playing is thrown away upon us. The Engliſh ſtage has ſhewn us players who many years before we have had occaſion to quarrel with them for remaining upon it, have ſhock'd our fathers with playing the parts of young princes, and beardleſs lovers.

Tho' we in general are more willing that men ſhould continue on the ſtage after the bloom of life than that women ſhould, yet we have met with inſtances even of perſons of the tenderer ſex who have had the art of borrowing the graces of their earlier years, even when they grew towards old women, nay and that much beyond what the men have ever been able to do. We have ſeen an actreſs of fifty, who, whenever ſhe pleas'd, was to all appearance barely ſixteen. The men have but very ſeldom been known to have

have this advantage; and among the women 'tis indeed the peculiar happineſs of a few only, whom nature has been more than ordinarily kind to.

It is allow'd that there are ſome women who have this peculiar advantage; but to make the accident uſeful to us, we muſt enquire how an actreſs who is approaching toward the time of life when ſhe will want it, is to know whether ſhe is poſſeſs'd of it or not; ſhe is not to truſt to her own eyes about it, they will be partial to her: every actreſs, if this were allow'd to be the teſt, would claim the privilege; 'tis the eyes of the audience that ſhe is to reſolve this queſtion by. This is a glaſs that will never deceive her; upon a fair and impartial examination in this, ſhe will timely ſee that the flower of her youth is faded, and that thoſe charms which us'd to make every thing ſhe ſaid or did pleaſe, are gone: this is a melancholy truth, but 'tis a uſeful one; and if ſhe has the mortification from hence to find that ſhe is no more young, ſhe will be taught by it, however, to eſcape the making herſelf ridiculous, by attempting to appear ſo when it is no longer poſſible ſhe ſhould ſucceed.

CHAP. IV.

Of the Characters of Footmen and Chambermaids on the Stage.

IN order to ſucceed in ſome of the ſubordinate parts in comedy, it is not neceſſary that the actreſs be in the prime of life, or bloom of youth and beauty; in many it is even eſſential that ſhe

be paſt her prime, while in others it is indeed equally neceſſary either that ſhe be very young, or that ſhe appear to be ſo; the laſt of theſe is the more proper, where the author has thrown into the mouths of theſe characters converſations too bold and familiar, or carrying too little reſpect to the perſons in whoſe ſervice they are, or where the imprudent advice they give to the young ladies they attend can have no excuſe, but that it comes from a raſh, unthinking, and giddy creature.

A real girliſhneſs in the adviſer, in this caſe, is a neceſſary qualification for the rendering the ſcene natural: on the other hand, where the waiting gentlewoman, in order to favour the lovers, takes certain ſteps herſelf which are not quite reconcileable to the ſtrict rules of modeſty, a pretended youth will be more proper for her purpoſe than a real one; the leſs the actreſs has of the real girl in her countenance, the more the indecent liberties ſhe ſuffers will entertain the audience.

It is allow'd then that a chambermaid is not always expected to have an air of youth and bloom; but there is another indiſpenſible quality which ſhe muſt never be without, that is, an extreme volubility of tongue; if any actreſs attempts theſe characters without this advantage, ſhe will loſe herſelf with every judicious perſon of the audience, and will never be able to give the true grace and ſpirit to her part.

There is another requiſite as neceſſary to the chambermaid as this volubility of tongue; this is an arch and cunning look, with a world of diſcernment, and occaſional ſecrecy in it; when an audience obſerves in a waiting gentlewoman a ſimple and unmeaning face, or an openneſs

and

and ingenuous ſerenity in her countenance, they expect to find in her character the ſimplicity of a *Foible*, not the addreſs and cunning of a *Kitty Pry*, or an intriguing chambermaid.

As neceſſary as a cunning look and a ready volubility of tongue are to the chambermaid, ſo eſſential are a cringing humility, an attentive obſervance, and an agility of body, to the footman. The beſt judges of comedy tell us, that in every ſcene of it every perſon ſhould be in motion; they ſpeak this only figuratively of the genteeler characters, but it is literally true of footmen; when they have a part in the ſcenes, it is eſſential to their characters that they find means to employ our eyes as well as our underſtandings continually about them. It will naturally follow from this principle, that the perſons who perform theſe characters ought to be of ſuch a figure as is fitted for running and ſkipping about; and a clumſy figure in the character of a footman, muſt be as abſurd as a ſtuttering voice in a chattering chambermaid.

The Engliſh ſtage is perhaps at this time as happy in characters of this kind as any theatre ever was; there is not a requiſite on the female part that is not found in its utmoſt perfection in Mrs. *Green*; nor in the other, but is as eminent in Mr. *Woodward*.

We do not forget that Mrs. *Clive* has ſucceeded to admiration in a great number of parts of this kind, and that even Mrs. *Woffington* has made a very pretty *Phillis*; but the nicer obſervers will find too much ſelf-ſufficiency and an unnatural freedom with her betters, in the former of theſe ladies in ſuch characters; and an eaſy indolence and polite deportment in the latter, which, as

neither of them will ever be able to ſhake off, will always be great obſtacles to their merit in theſe parts, and the want of which will always ſet Mrs. *Green* above them both, tho' her real excellence in them were much leſs than that of either.

We are to allow no little merit in the footmens characters to Mr. *Yates*; he has long pleas'd us in them, and long may do ſo; a requiſite aſſurance is not wanting in either this player nor his rival in theſe characters; perhaps it would be a point not eaſily determined which of them has the moſt of it; but the greater fund of underſtanding that ſeems to be in Mr. *Woodward*, and his figure, ſo much better proportioned to that neceſſary agility we have mentioned, will always, we imagine, give him a ſuperiority.

The End of the FIRST PART.

THE

THE ACTOR.

PART the SECOND.

Of thoſe Aſſiſtances which Players ought to receive from Art.

IT will evidently appear from the obſervations deliver'd in the firſt part of this treatiſe, that there are but few perſons who are proper to appear on the ſtage; and that even out of theſe, it is a yet much ſmaller number who are calculated for performing the principal characters. This is a truth which the greater part of thoſe perſons who determine to make the ſtage their profeſſion ſcarce ever trouble themſelves with reflecting on. Many of thoſe who determine on this way of life, ought no more to conceive it poſſible that they can entertain us in it, than a fat fellow wheezing at every ſtep with an aſthma, that he could win the prize in a foot-race; yet they offer themſelves blindly and boldly to the managers, and they find managers who as blindly and as boldly receive them.

Not only many of theſe people puſh themſelves upon the ſtage, without having any one of the neceſſary diſpoſitions for ſucceeding in it; but often thoſe who really have the proper requiſites, employ the leaſt of their care in ſhewing them, or in diſtinguiſhing themſelves by the only things which ought to command our notice. They are thruſt forward in ſome part, not that is fit for them, but that it pleaſes their fancy; they are ſupported by a body of friends for their firſt appearances: they find they have an applauſe that night, and are not hiſs'd the next; and then take it for granted they have done every thing neceſſary to their own honour and our ſatisfaction.

We are not to flatter ourſelves ſo far as to ſuppoſe that we can perſuade thoſe people who attempt the ſtage without being form'd by nature for it, to quit it: Nor are we even to ſuppoſe that it will be in our power to prevent a multitude of others of the ſame ſtamp, encourag'd by the ſucceſs of people like themſelves, from entering upon it with the ſame impoſſibility of ſucceeding.

We are not to imagine that we ever can improve our theatrical entertainments by inſpiring a ſet of wretches whom we ſee at preſent upon the ſtage, with ſo noble a paſſion as a juſt emulation, while they play for no other end but intereſt. One might indeed wiſh better of theſe people, becauſe they are too numerous among our preſent players; but what have we to hope for from them, when we ſee that they have no more love for their profeſſion, than reſpect for their audience; but come upon the ſtage to deliver out their parts, as if they

were

were easing themselves of a burthen which they were hir'd for carrying, and in pain till they were rid of.

In endeavouring to prove the necessity there is, that the players in comedy as well as tragedy, shou'd have received many peculiar accomplishments from nature; we have not been vain enough to imagine that we shou'd persuade people who are not thus form'd for the stage, to keep off it: We only propos'd to ourselves to disabuse those who have establish'd it as a rule that all that is necessary to the making an actor, is, that the man have a memory, and the power of speaking, walking, and tossing his arms about.

In endeavouring to prove how diligently the player ought to study in order to arrive at perfection in his business; we have not flatter'd ourselves so far as to suppose we cou'd conquer the idleness of those performers, who every day give us instances enough of their being enemies to industry. We have only meant by this to open the eyes of those beginners in this way of life, who from the seeming ease with which the best players obtain applause, are apt to persuade themselves, that a very little trouble will serve to prepare them for playing both tragedy and comedy. We shall endeavour to shew in the sequel, to those who wish, and have some grounds to hope, that they may in time arrive at the art of playing the one or the other with success, what are the talents, and what the means by which they may command our applause.

CHAP. I.

In what the Truth of a Repreſentation on the Stage conſiſts.

ALL dramatic fictions pleaſe us the more, the more like they are to real adventures and occurrences. The perfection which we are moſt of all deſirous of ſeeing arriv'd at in the repreſentation of theſe pieces, is what the judges of theatrical performances expreſs by the word *Truth*.

They mean, by that term, the concourſe of all thoſe appearances which may aſſiſt in deceiving the audience into an imagination, that 'tis a ſcene of real life they are attending to.

Theſe appearances are naturally divided into two claſſes. The play of the performer furniſhes thoſe of the one kind; the others are foreign to his acting; and we owe them to the diſguiſe we ſee him under, or to the decorations of the place where he plays.

The appearances of the firſt kind; that is, thoſe which ariſe from the theatrical action of the performer, are of all others the moſt important to the illuſion; and theſe the nature of our ſubject leads us more immediately to the examination of. They in general conſiſt in the nice and perfect obſervation of every circumſtance of the character, and every thing requiſite to it. The performance of an actor, in whatever ſcene or character, is only true, when we perceive in him every thing that agrees with the age, condition, and ſituation of the perſon he repreſents.

repreſents. Does a player enter upon the ſtage in the part of *Sciolto* in the *Fair Penitent?* We ſhall never allow him to repreſent the character, even to the eye, if we do not ſee in him the wrinkles of age, and the whole carriage of a man old enough to be the father of the perſons he converſes with. *Sciolto* is a man of great rank and quality; the actor will therefore never be what we expect in the character, if he does not join to the gravity of the old man the deportment and air of nobility in every part: He is rejoiced at the ſuppoſed happineſs of his family in the beginning of the play, and carries a mixture of an unconquerable grief and reſentment, at the behaviour of his daughter in the latter part of it: The image which the player gives of him, is therefore not at all juſt, if we have not, in the firſt part, all the tranſport of a fond and indulgent parent expreſs'd, and in the latter, all the rage and vengeance of a man of honour wounded in the tendereſt point, and ſeeking the means of vengeance, tho' at the expence of life itſelf.

The actor who is to expreſs to us a peculiar paſſion and its effects, if he wou'd play his character with *Truth*, is not only to aſſume the emotions which that paſſion wou'd produce in the generality of mankind; but he is to give it that peculiar form under which it wou'd appear, when exerting itſelf in the breaſt of ſuch a perſon as he is giving us the portrait of. The rage of *Bajazet* is very different from that of Mr. Alderman *Fondlewife*, tho' both are rais'd from ſuſpicions of the very ſame kind: And the grief of *Statira* when the conqueror of the world proves falſe to her, is very different from that of *Phyllis* when ſhe has loſt her *Damon*.

The

The expreſſion of the actor is alſo to be varied, as well as his deportment, according to the character he repreſents. Love in a young man ought to burſt forth in tranſports and impetuoſity; in an old fellow it is to ſhew itſelf by degrees, and with a deal of art and circumſpection.

A perſon of a ſuperior quality, throws into his very ſorrow, into his complaints, and into his threats a ſort of decent greatneſs, and has ever leſs violence, even in his anger, than a perſon who has had no education. The affliction conceived for the loſs of a ſum of money, paints itſelf in very different colours in the face of an old miſer, and in that of a young extravagant; and the coxcomb does not bluſh at a reproof in the ſame manner as the man of merit and modeſty.

The truth of expreſſion in the player depends, upon the whole, on the truth of the action, and on that of the recitation.

CHAP. II.

On the Truth of Action *on the Stage.*

TO exhibit *True Action* in a part, is to do every thing allotted by the author to the character repreſented, in a manner exactly conformable to what the perſon himſelf wou'd or ought to have done it in, under every circumſtance and in every ſituation thro' which the action of the play ſucceſſively carries him.

Every ſcene produces ſome change in the circumſtances of the character, and every change of this kind demands a multitude of other variations in the actor in conformity to it. Many occurrences

occurrences dictate of themſelves to the actor what he is to do, and in what manner he is to behave under them. A lady is, for inſtance, introduced on the ſtage, endeavouring to ſooth the pains of a forc'd abſence from her lover, by drawing his picture from her memory. The lover bribes her maid, and is introduc'd into her chamber, where, without being diſcovered, he can ſee how ſhe employs the hours of his imaginary abſence. It is evident in this caſe, that he is to place himſelf in ſuch a manner that he may contemplate the picture, as it riſes from her touches, without being diſcovered by her; that from time to time, his curioſity tempting him to nearer and nearer views, he is to throw himſelf into the danger of being ſeen; that at every motion ſhe makes, he is to expreſs a terror leſt he ſhould be obſerv'd; and that, eager to prolong the raviſhing contemplation, he is to recover with a precipitate haſte, but at the ſame time with a viſible affliction in his countenance, that part of the ſtage where he is out of her ſight.

There are other circumſtances as intereſting as this, which yet do not point out ſo clearly to the player, the action that ſhould attend them, and we frequently have opportunities of ſeeing, that there are ſome in which it is too eaſy for him to take an exactly contrary part to nature, to reality, and to the intention of the poet. We ſhall ſpare the cenſure of our own performers, and give an inſtance of this in a well known *French* tragedy, that of *Iphigenia*. When *Agamemnon* is aſk'd by that unhappy princeſs, if ſhe may be permitted to aſſiſt at the ſacrifice he is preparing, he anſwers, *You ſhall be there, my child!* Many actors have imagin'd that it was their buſineſs

ſineſs to add a great deal of the pathetic to this ſhort anſwer, by fixing their eyes with the utmoſt affection, grief, and tenderneſs on the lady, while they deliver'd it. But this, however proper it may appear at firſt ſight, is, when ſtrictly conſider'd, abſolutely contrary to nature, and reality; for doubtleſs *Agamemnon*, who knew he was going to ſacrifice that very daughter, who had ſo little imagination of it, that ſhe was aſking it as a favour that ſhe might be preſent, and who did not intend ſhe ſhou'd know his cruel purpoſe till it cou'd be no longer conceal'd, ought to turn his eyes away, while he gives this anſwer to her innocent queſtion, that ſhe might not perceive his grief and agony while he ſpoke to her.

In the *Penelope*, another favourite play of that nation, *Ulyſſes*, after having been a long time expos'd to the vengeance of *Neptune* and *Venus*, and after having ſuffer'd innumerable hardſhips, returns to his country. Charm'd with the behaviour of his ſon, he diſcovers himſelf to him; and the faithful *Eumæus* is preſent at this ſcene. At firſt thought one wou'd be apt to imagine, that the buſineſs of the player who repreſents *Telemachus*, ſhou'd be to throw himſelf immediately at the feet of his father, and give himſelf up to all thoſe tranſports of joy natural to a ſon, who, after ſeeking his parent thro' the world in vain, had now met him unexpectedly. But, on farther conſidering the circumſtances, we ſhall change our opinion. *Ulyſſes* had been abſent ſo many years, that his ſon, a child at the time he left him, cou'd have no remembrance of his perſon; he ought therefore to expect a confirmation of the truth of what was told him by a ſtranger, before he gave way

to

to thoſe emotions, which would naturally and neceſſarily ariſe if he was rightly inform'd. The action of the player, who performs the character of *Telemachus*, will therefore be *true*, if he expreſſes only a mixture of aſtoniſhment and reſpect at what his father ſays, and puts on an air of indetermination, during the moment that interferes before a perſon whoſe fidelity he is perfectly convinc'd of, aſſures him, that he ſees his father and his king.

Theſe and many other examples of a like kind, abundantly prove how very different the true action requir'd in a great character under particular circumſtances, may be from that which may firſt preſent itſelf to the imagination of the player.

It is plain alſo from the laſt inſtance, that he is not to ſuppoſe it ſufficient in all caſes to ſtudy the truth of the action, with which he is to accompany the words the author has put into his mouth; in many circumſtances the ſilence of a player, may be as eloquent as the fineſt form of words cou'd be; nay, there is often more beauty, as well as more difficulty, in the being properly ſilent, than in the delivering the moſt ſounding line a poet can put into the part of the higheſt character.

It is not long ſince, to borrow one more inſtance from our neighbours, that a *French* actreſs immortaliz'd her reputation in the character of *Penelope*, in the play we have juſt mentioned; and we may aſſure the world that a judicious and well-conducted ſilence, had no little ſhare in the acquiring her thoſe applauſes ſhe receiv'd in it. The diſcovery of her huſband who had been ſo long abſent, had never ſtruck the ſpectators in that amazing manner, had there been

been no merit in her ſhare of the ſcene, beſide the repeating the words of her part. What charm'd every body, was the deportment of the actreſs, the inſenſible gradations by which ſhe turn'd herſelf toward the pretended ſtranger, as ſhe more and more aſſur'd herſelf, that the voice of the perſon who ſpoke to her, was that of the huſband ſhe had ſo long lamented; this had infinitely more effect than any thing ſhe ſaid, or cou'd have ſaid on the occaſion.

The difficulty of obſerving every circumſtance on which the truth of action depends, is greateſt of all in thoſe peculiar ſituations of the character, under which the performer is obliged to play as it were two parts at the ſame time.

We have an inſtance of this kind in a ſcene in the *Old Batchelor*, in which the dotard, his wife, and the gallant, under the diſguiſe of Mr. *Spintext*, are on the ſtage together.

The lady has here the jealouſy of a huſband to deceive, and the ardour of a favourite lover to return at the ſame time. She embraces the gallant by a pretended miſtake inſtead of the huſband; ſhe cajoles the dotard with fond expreſſions, while ſhe makes ſigns over his head to the lover, and addreſſes her diſcourſe to the one while ſhe pretends to ſpeak to the other. The actreſs who wou'd ſucceed in this character, ought to be extremely upon her guard, that the audience may not find her either too little upon the watch as to her huſband's jealouſy, or wanting in that tenderneſs which ſhe ought to ſhew to her lover.

Theſe ſort of incidents are abundantly difficult to perform to ſatisfaction; but there are yet ſome others in which there requires ſtill more addreſs and

and management. There are thoſe in which the performer, has three inſtead of two parts to play at the ſame time; where there are two people to be deceived by two different ſtories at the ſame inſtant, and the performer is all the while to expreſs alſo to the audience a ſenſe of the difficulty of what is doing, and a continual dread of being diſcovered by one or other of the perſons deceived. We have an eminent inſtance of this kind in one of our farces, where an intriguing maid-ſervant finds it neceſſary for the good of her young maſter to delude his father, and the aunt of the lady he courts, into an opinion of one another, as perſons out of their ſenſes. While the actreſs is here conſtruing every look and geſture of Mr. *Goodall* into madneſs to Mrs. *Highmore*, and every glance and accent of that lady into frenzy to him; ſhe is expreſſing to the audience all the while the utmoſt terror in the world, leſt one or the other of them ſhou'd diſcover her: Nay, ſhe even adds to the neceſſary perplexity of the part ſhe has to act, by blending with her very terror the pert ſelf-ſufficiency, that marks out the reſt of her character; and gives us one of the ſtrongeſt modern examples it is poſſible to quote, of the application of the rule deliver'd in the laſt chapter, that the ſame paſſions are to be expreſs'd very differently, as acting upon different characters. The perſon who underſtands this merit in Mrs. *Clive*'s playing this ſhort character, will not wonder if it appear very inſipid when perform'd by any body elſe.

There is no conceiving, but by an attentive examination, into the peculiar merits of the performer, how much many of thoſe characters

which we are apt to admire the author for drawing, owe to the manner in which they are repreſented: And on the other hand, the plays of *Moliere* in *France*, and thoſe of *Beaumont* and *Fletcher* with us, abound in characters which are ſcarce ever play'd with juſtice. We are not therefore to wonder that theſe do not always bring full houſes, and of conſequence, that they are ſeldom perform'd. The managers may depend on it, they wou'd ſee no empty benches on the nights ſuch pieces were play'd, if they wou'd employ as many of their principal performers in them as are neceſſary; and allot the characters of conſequence to ſuch perſons as are able to give them all the force and expreſſion they require. They tell us they don't play theſe, becauſe the town is more fond of novelty: Let them do what we are recommending to them, and they will give us one of the greateſt and moſt acceptable kinds of novelty in their power.

CHAP. III.

Obſervations on the two principal Things eſſential to the Truth of Action.

AS action and recitation compoſe the eſſence of what we call expreſſion in the player; ſo the judicious changes in the countenance, and thoſe in the attitude and geſture form the truth of action. That the changes of the actor's countenance may appear juſt, and ſufficiently expreſſive to an audience, it is not enough that the paſſion which he is to deſcribe to them barely diſcover itſelf in his eyes; it muſt be ſeen there with an uncommon force and vivacity. The face

face that can mark a paſſion but weakly on the ſtage, is to be rank'd with thoſe which cannot mark it at all: That very degree of expreſſion in the countenance, which is capable of affecting us elſewhere, is not enough to ſtrike us in the player.

The paintings expos'd upon the ſtage, are ſeen at a certain diſtance by the greater number of the audience: they muſt therefore have a ſtrength in the touches ſomewhat too bold for a near view; but yet ſo moderated, that it may be overlook'd by thoſe who have that ſituation, in conſideration of the neceſſities of the reſt.

The paſſions muſt all ſhew themſelves with life and ſpirit in the countenance of the player; yet they are not to diſtort or disfigure it. It is the misfortune of one of the beſt actreſſes of the preſent or perhaps of any age, that a too great ſenſibility in ſcenes of diſtreſs throws her features out of all form, and excites our diſtaſte inſtead of our compaſſion; and 'tis the peculiar advantage of another of the modern favourites of that ſex, to acquire a beauty in the height of ſorrow, which ſhe wants at other times. We cannot but regret the fortune of one of theſe ladies, as much as we admire that of the other; but we are not to expect that we ſhall find in others ſo ſingular a charm in a face of ſorrow, as we diſcover in the latter of them. It is not the good fortune of every tragedy princeſs to have a face that miſery ſits well upon; much leſs to have ſuch an one as we adore in the heroine of another houſe, for charming us equally under all the diſguiſes the poet for the night chooſes to ſhew it in. We have at leaſt a right, however, to expect that anger is not repreſented to us by convulſions,

ſions, and that ſorrow and diſtreſs are not made ſhocking, when the poet intended they ſhould be intereſting and affecting.

Whatever exceptions may be made in regard to the juſtly celebrated actreſs hinted at above, it is certain that in general the players only fall into theſe exceſſes, from their not being affected in ſuch a degree as the circumſtance and ſituation of their characters require. Does the player feel ſenſibly and ſtrongly the paſſion he is to expreſs to us? It will then paint itſelf in his eyes, without his diſtorting them to make it do ſo. But is he oblig'd to teize and torture his ſoul, to rouze it out of the ſtupid and lethargic ſtate he finds it in? The conſtrain'd ſtate of his mind, will ſhew itſelf in all his action, his very features, as well as his geſtures and motions, will diſcover it, and he will appear rather a ſick man harraſs'd with a fit of ſome ſtrange malady, than a player affected by a common paſſion, and endeavouring only to expreſs it.

It ſometimes happens that the countenance of a performer, is only fitted by nature for the expreſſion of ſome one peculiar paſſion or affection of the ſoul. There are countenances naturally diſmal which ſeem form'd only to ſhed tears, and to draw them from other people; and there are others which ſeem calculated only for mirth and jollity; to be joyous themſelves and to make every body elſe ſo. In the firſt, gaiety never ſits eaſy; they never laugh but with conſtraint; and they tell you too evidently that they are merry only becauſe they are bid to be ſo. Sorrow ſits upon the face of the others in the ſame unnatural and forc'd manner; one wou'd take it for a ſtranger endeavouring by force to ſettle itſelf

itſelf in a country where every native is an enemy. A judicious regulation in the attitude, geſtures and manner of the player is as neceſſary, and of as much conſequence to the truth of his action, as all that can be done by the countenance. The general deportment and proper attitudes in the ſeveral ſcenes a performer may be engag'd in, have been ſufficiently treated of in the preceding chapters; we ſhall therefore avoid repetitions, and content ourſelves with ſome general remarks on the particular geſtures neceſſary under peculiar circumſtances.

Geſtures have a determinate ſignification, as much as words; and, when properly apply'd, they add a vaſt deal of life and force to the action.

The moſt ſignificant of them will even ſerve to expreſs to an audience every paſſion that we are capable of being agitated by, and raiſe in the ſpectators every ſentiment that we wiſh to inſpire them with: Without the aſſiſtance of words, we are able to ſignify by geſtures and ſigns our hopes, our fears, our ſatisfaction, or our diſpleaſure. We can entreat by them, and obtain our requeſts as readily as if words were added to them. We can lament and expreſs our diſtreſs and ſorrow by them, and that in ſo plain and intelligible a manner, as to force others to weep with us; and finally, we can threaten by them, and by thoſe threatnings excite terror.

The ſigns which we uſe to expreſs theſe ſeveral intentions of the ſoul are not however merely arbitrary, they are dictated by nature's ſelf, and are common to all mankind. The language of ſigns we all ſpeak without having been taught

taught it; by means of which we are able to converſe with people of all nations; and nature has been ſo determinate in the ſenſe of every particle of it, that art would attempt in vain to make it either more intelligible or more expreſſive. The utmoſt that can be done by the niceſt hand, is to poliſh and ornament it; and all that the player needs, or indeed is able to do, is only to avoid improprieties in it, and to be careful to uſe it only in ſuch parts as nature ſhews it to be neceſſary and uſeful in.

The judgment of the player muſt inform him, that when he acts the part of a man of high rank and quality, he is to uſe fewer geſtures, and thoſe leſs violent than when he acts a clown; nor is it difficult to gueſs from whence this neceſſary diſtinction ariſes. Nature left to herſelf, is under leſs reſtraint, and runs into more irregular emotions, than when curb'd and regulated by a proper education.

People in high life have the ſame affections with the vulgar; but they have more hypocriſy. Their very paſſions put on the air of diſſimulation, which has been inculcated into them in all their other actions, and appear moderate and reaſonable even when they are the moſt inordinate and ungovern'd. A man of high rank is in a manner ſedate and tranquil even in his reſentment, while a cobler under the ſame circumſtances wou'd be outrageous, kick the tables and chairs about the houſe, and half murder his wife and children, tho' they did not even know what it was that put him in this fury.

If the frequent uſe of paſſionate geſtures is on this account not allowable in genteel comedy, much

much leſs is it ſo in tragedy: As much as the gentleman is above the vulgar, ſo much is the king or heroe above the private gentleman: If the former is expected to maintain a certain dignity and reſpect adequate to his rank above the commonalty; the latter is under infinitely greater neceſſity of ſupporting his character by a majeſtic deportment, and keeping up, by a grave and ſedate carriage, the high idea we have formed of his virtues, and accompliſhments.

No leſs eminent a player than Mr. *Garrick* has been accus'd of not keeping up this dignity in ſome of his tragedy characters. We can by no means agree with thoſe who are for making the charge general againſt him, but are apt to believe that the people who do ſo, are influenced merely by his want of figure; and give no little proof of their own incapacity of being ſtruck by things of much greater conſequence.

His *Macbeth* and *Richard*, we take to be maſter-pieces in this kind; and many of his other characters are kept up at leaſt with ſo much dignity, that a candid ſpectator will not think him cenſurable in this reſpect; but there are ſome in which he is evidently wanting. In *Pierre*, perhaps, we ſhou'd not ſee this defect in him, if we had not an unlucky compariſon at hand, with that player in the ſame part, who certainly excells all the world in this peculiar article. When *Jaffeir* mentions honeſty as a virtue that is not fit for this world, Mr. *Garrick* forgets the dignity of his character to give into a ſhrewdneſs and ſeverity very natural to him, and in general very becoming, when he anſwers him,

Why, powerful villainy firſt ſet it up
For its own eaſe and ſafety—Honeſt men
Are the ſoft eaſy cuſhions on which knaves
Repoſe and fatten: Were all mankind villains
They'd ſtarve each other; lawyers wou'd want practice,
Cut-throats rewards: each man wou'd kill his brother
Himſelf! none wou'd be paid or hang'd for murther:
Honeſty! 'twas a cheat invented firſt
To bind the hands of bold deſerving rogues,
That fools and cowards might ſit ſafe in power,
And lord it uncontrol'd above their betters.

We are pleaſed with the force and ſtrength he gives to the ſatire in this ſpeech, the keenneſs of which has never been ſo great in any other mouth; but we are vext to find the dignity of the character quite forgot in the ſpeaking it.

There is the ſame defect in his playing *Lear*, and that from the ſame cauſe. It is not that Mr. *Garrick* is not equal to the taſk of keeping up the dignity of a king or a heroe; we find by the inſtances firſt cited that he is; but he gives way to thoughts of another kind in ſo great a degree, that he frequently loſes this part of his character. It is the ſame natural turn to be ſevere, that robs us of the king in *Lear*, which before ſunk the heroe in *Pierre*, as this gentleman plays it. *Shakeſpear* has put ſome of the keeneſt things he ever wrote into the mouth of this enrag'd monarch, and this player gives them a peculiar ſtrength and ſharpneſs in the expreſſion; but then the king is not found in the ſatyriſt,

tyriſt, they are rather ſharp things deliver'd as any other character of the play might have ſaid them.

Even in the mad ſcenes, we know from another player's manner of conducting them, that the majeſty of the monarch may be kept up amidſt the wildeſt ſallies of the frantic lunatic; but ſurely the beſt friends of Mr. *Garrick* will not diſpute with us, that in this whole part of the play, he looks as like a mad any thing elſe, as a mad king. *Shakeſpear* has every where kept up *Lear*'s remembrance of his regal ſtate even in his utmoſt ravings; he introduces him with the ornaments of royalty about him, tho' made of weeds and ſtraw, and makes him remember that he is *every inch a king*: But 'tis *Shakeſpear* only, not the actor in this caſe that does it: even when this player ſays,

When I do ſtare, ſee how the ſubject quakes. I pardon that man's life— What was the cauſe? Adultery—Thou ſhalt not die! Die for adultery! No; the wren goes to't, and the ſmall gilded fly engenders in my ſight. Let copulation thrive; For *Gloſter*'s baſtard ſon was kinder to his father, than were my daughters got i'the lawful bed. To't, Luxury, pell mell, for I want ſoldiers.

The judicious obſerver, tho' pleaſed with the juſt emphaſis laid on the words, tho' charm'd with the ſpirit with which they are ſpoken, yet cannot but obſerve, that they are not deliver'd with a kingly majeſty: They ſeem rather the flights of a man whoſe madneſs made him fancy himſelf a monarch, than of one who ever really was ſo.

We mention this foible of this, in moſt things, inimitable performer, principally for the ſake of the growing ſet of players, who ſeem to think him the ſtandard of perfection in every thing. People's faults are much more eaſily imitated than their beauties, and this is one which thoſe who are fond of being thought like Mr. *Garrick* are moſt apt to fall into. If they wou'd form themſelves on the judgment of others, let them to the life, ſpirit, and vivacity of Mr. *Garrick*, join an imitation as nearly as they can of the dignity of Mr. *Quin*.

We ſhall not be thought partial to this gentleman, we hope, if we ſay that no man at preſent equals him, or perhaps ever did in this great article of the player's profeſſion.

How eaſily do we perceive in him, even in this very ſcene of *Lear*, that it is a king who rails! With what a majeſty as well as ſharpneſs, with what an awful ſeverity does he cry out,

See how yon Juſtice rails on that ſimple thief. Shake 'em together, and the firſt that drops out, thief or juſtice, is a villain—Thou haſt ſeen a farmer's dog bark at a beggar; and the man ran away from the cur: There thou mightſt behold the great image of authority—A dog's obey'd in office. Thou raſcal beadle, hold thy heavy hand: why doſt thou laſh that ſtrumpet? Thou hotly luſts to enjoy her in that very kind for which thou whip'ſt her. Do, do—The judge that ſentenc'd her has been before hand with thee.

We

We may obſerve that in theſe parts it is moſt difficult of all others to keep up a true dignity; and in which, with the utmoſt advantages, it appears leaſt ſtriking. If we wou'd ſee it in a higher light, let us obſerve this player in the part in which we have obſerv'd one of the greateſt actors in the world to fail in this reſpect, that of *Pierre*: with what a majeſty of deportment does he introduce that character on the ſtage, cenſuring himſelf with a noble ſeverity for not becoming the avenger of an injured people; with what an air of true dignity does he tell *Jaffier*,

I am a rogue as well as they,
A fine gay bold-fac'd villain as thou ſee'ſt me;
'Tis true, I pay my debts when they 're contracted;
I ſteal from no man, wou'd not cut a throat
To gain admiſſion to a great man's purſe
Or a whore's bed: I'd not betray my friend
To get his place or fortune: I ſcorn to flatter
A blown-up fool above me, to cruſh the wretch beneath me,
Yet, *Jaffier*, for all this I am a villain!
Yes, and a moſt notorious villain;
To ſee the ſufferings of my fellow creatures,
And own my ſelf a man: To ſee our ſenators
Cheat the deluded people with a ſhew
Of liberty, which yet they never taſte of.
They ſay by them our hands are free from fetters,
Yet whom they pleaſe they lay in baſeſt bonds,
Bring whom they pleaſe to infamy and ſorrow;
Drive us like wrecks down the rough tide of power,

While there's no hold to ſave us from deſtruction.
All that bear this are villains, and I one,
Not to rouſe up at the great call of nature,
To check the growth of theſe domeſtic ſpoilers,
Who make us ſlaves, and tell us 'tis our charter.

Perhaps there have been few characters ſo happily introduc'd to us, as that of *Pierre* is by theſe ſentiments; we ſee at once the greatneſs of ſoul we are to expect from him in every circumſtance that ſhall follow; and, as Mr. *Quin* plays the part, we are never ſhock'd with the abſence of that greatneſs, even for a ſingle moment.

When this player has the advantage of ſuch a character as *Cato*, or *Bajazet*, his taſk is eaſier in this way: he riſes in thoſe with the greateſt eaſe to a dignity that a character of this more private rank would not bear, and that nobody elſe equals: but there is yet another part in which he excels even his dignity in theſe. The character we mean is *Comus*: in this, thro' the whole part, he is ſomething more than man: the majeſty of the *Deity* he repreſents, dwells about him in every attitude, and in the pronouncing every period; with what a ſuperior greatneſs does he introduce himſelf to us by his manner of delivering the glorióus lines that open his part.

The ſtar that bids the ſhepherd fold,
Now the top of heav'n doth hold,
And the gilded car of day
His glowing axle doth allay
In the ſteep Atlantic ſtream,
While the ſlope ſun his upward beam
Shoots againſt the duſky pole,
Pacing tow'rd the other goal

Of

Of his chamber in the eaſt;
Mean-time welcome joy and feaſt.

And with what dignity, after the ſong that is perform'd here, does he go on,

We that are of purer fire
Imitate the ſtarry choir,
Who in their nightly watchful ſpheres
Lead in ſwift dance the months and years.
The ſounds, the ſeas, and all their finny drove,
Now to the moon in wav'ring morrice move;
While on the tawny ſands and ſhelves
Trip the pert fairies, and the dapper elves.

His invocation of *Cotytto*, which ſucceeds this, is deliver'd with equal judgment with the reſt. When men invoke the *Divinity*, they are to do it with the utmoſt humility and awe; but the player, here, remembers that he is only addreſſing to an equal; himſelf a *deity*, and the imaginary being he addreſſes to, no more. 'Tis therefore a peculiar mark of his judgment, as we have obſerv'd, not a blemiſh in his playing, as ſome have ſuppos'd, that he here keeps up all the dignity he had ſet out with, and in the ſame ſpirit in which he had before ſpoke, continues,

Hail, goddeſs of nocturnal ſport,
Dark-veil'd *Cotytto*, t' whom the ſecret flame
Of midnight torches burns, myſterious dame,
Who ne'er art call'd, but when the dragon womb
Of Stygian darkneſs ſpits her thickeſt gloom,
And makes one blot of all the air,
Stay thy cloudy Ebon chair,
Wherein thou rid'ſt with *Hecate*, and befriend

Us, thy vow'd prieſts, till utmoſt end
Of all thy dues be done, and none left out,
Ere the babling eaſtern ſcout,
The nice morn on the Indian ſteep,
From her cabin'd loop-hole peep,
And to the tell-tale ſun deſcry
Our conceal'd ſolemnity.

The manner in which he makes love to the lady, is of a piece with the reſt. He is paſſionately enamour'd of her; but then he courts her not with ſupplications, but with promiſes; he gives her reaſons for complying with him, rather than entreaties to do ſo; and this in a tone and manner becoming a ſuperior, not an inferior: in ſhort, he makes love in a very moving and almoſt compulſive way; but that rather as a *Deity* than a *Mortal*.

To ſum up the praiſe of this quality in the performer we are mentioning in this part, we ſhall not ſcruple to affirm, that if any thing claims the title of being the greateſt ſentence, and moſt nobly pronounc'd of any on the *Engliſh* theatre, it is that threat of *Comus* to the lady, where, on her offering to get up to leave him, he tells her,

Nay, lady, ſit—If I but wave this wand,
Your nerves are all bound up in alabaſter,
And you a ſtatue; or, as *Daphne* was,
Root-bound, who fled *Apollo*.

The majeſty of this menace will perhaps always loſe half its power, when ſpoken by any body but the perſon we are celebrating for it.

Theſe

Theſe are the general rules for the deportment of the actor, where no peculiar occaſion calls for geſtures; but in many ſcenes of tragedy, and particularly in many of thoſe of the greateſt tenderneſs, or of the moſt violent emotions of the ſoul, from whatever cauſe, the actor is abſolved from his general injunction, and is expected not only to uſe every proper geſture in its utmoſt force, that can mark to the audience any paſſion, any affection of the ſoul; but he muſt even have recourſe to many others which have no regular ſignification in their own nature, and yet ſerve to keep up the life and ſpirit of the action. It is not to be underſtood, however, that every paſſionate part in tragedy neceſſarily demands all theſe aſſiſtances: it is even true, on the contrary, that ſome of the greateſt and moſt affecting ſcenes we know of, require no geſtures at all; many of them would be render'd ridiculous by them; and perhaps it is not more juſt to tell the greateſt actor of one of our houſes, that *Othello* would be more *Othello* with more geſtures, than to inform a favourite of the other, that *Romeo* and *Caſtalio* would expreſs ſome of their moſt tender ſcenes much better if their arms had a little more reſt allow'd them.

Thoſe geſtures which tragedy allows as ornamentative, rather than expreſſive, are vaſtly more under the command of art than the others; as they have no meaning in themſelves, the player gives them juſt ſuch as he pleaſes by the look he adds to them: theſe are amuſing, but the others are infinitely more important, as they regard that greateſt of all conſiderations to the judicious player, the truth of action.

An audience will expect that the geſtures of a performer, even when they expreſs nothing, ſhould yet have an air of expreſſion and meaning; and particularly that they ſhould ſeem eaſy and natural, not ſtudy'd, elaborate, and practis'd. In thoſe characters which are meant moſt of all to intereſt an audience, every motion ſhould keep up an air of dignity; and not only in theſe, but in every other part, they ſhould be occaſionally varied. When they continue the ſame throughout ſeveral ſcenes, the audience cannot but look on them as the habits of the man who acts, not as the effects of impreſſions given him in the different ſituations and circumſtances of the character he is repreſenting.

To theſe rules we may add another more general one. The player ought to uſe more or fewer geſtures of every kind, according to the taſte of the nation in which he performs. In *France* he ſhould uſe greatly more than in *England*; and in *England* more than in *Italy*.

One farther remark may ſerve to cloſe this chapter. There are ſome characters (to the honour of our poets be it ſpoken, they are principally in our farces, particularly in thoſe which are borrowed from the *French*) which have been invented out of mere caprice and wantonneſs of fancy, and have nothing in real life that is at all like them. The actor has here no ſure rules to go by, no model to form his character upon. Was there ever, among mankind ſuch a monſter as the *Mock-Doctor*? and what is the player to do who is to repreſent a thing that does not exiſt? Our way of judging of the performer in this caſe is, uſually, by comparing him with the player whom we remember to have laſt perform'd the

ſame character with ſucceſs; no matter whether he were right or wrong, we judge that beſt for ever after which is moſt like what he did. The judicious player, who takes up a character of this kind, is therefore to make it his firſt care not to differ too much from the laſt perſon who excelled in it. Perhaps the only way to pleaſe the greater part of an audience as well as he did, is to copy his faults: if even this is neceſſary, it muſt be in ſome degree at leaſt ſubmitted to; ſince, in general, the more like the new actor's play is to what the people have been uſed to, the better they will be pleas'd with it.

CHAP. IV.

On the Truth of Recitation.

IT will not avail that the action of a player is ever ſo juſt, ſo judicious and expreſſive, if his delivery, or, as it may be more properly call'd, his recitation be faulty. When the performer has a judicious audience to act before, it is in vain for him to expect applauſe for pleaſing the eyes, if he does not at the ſame time pleaſe the ears and the underſtanding.

There are a multitude of paſſages in the antient writers which prove, that the delivery of their dramatic writings was not left to the diſcretion of the actors, but was determined by note and meaſure. That this was the caſe is pretty certain; but perhaps it is yet to be determin'd, whether a theatrical repreſentation would be the better or the worſe for the addition of ſo ſtrict a regularity.

A very eminent writer, the Abbe *Condillac*, in his *Eſſay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, is of

opinion, that if the tones and cadences of the voice of our comic actors were to be regulated by the laws of muſick, the performances would be infinitely more pleaſing than they are at preſent; but it ſhould ſeem that in this caſe, their recitation would be in a kind of ſong, and we ſhould at leaſt be reduced to hear our ſprightlieſt ſentiments deliver'd in ſomething like the recitative of an opera; a ſort of muſick which thoſe who go to an entertainment in which they expect their ears only to be charm'd, and that even at the expence of their underſtanding, have enough to do to reconcile themſelves to, under the name either of ſpeaking or ſinging. Surely we ſhould not eaſily bring ourſelves to ſuppoſe, that a part was well play'd becauſe it was well ſung. It is to be allow'd indeed, that the notes of the muſick not leaving the ſinger at liberty to chooſe his own tones and cadences, he is not in the ſame danger that the player is of chooſing wrong ones: but all that playing could gain by muſick of the very beſt kind being adapted to it, would be, at the utmoſt, no more than the additional power which muſick has in itſelf of expreſſing the different paſſions by its determinate ſounds; and this, tho' a vaſt deal has been ſaid in favour of the antient muſick about it, does not appear at preſent to be at all adequate to the force and expreſſion that muſt be loſt, by a good ſpeaker's being deny'd to give the utmoſt force to the words of the author in his recitation.

The ableſt judges ſeem to give it in favour of mere ſpeaking; and others, when they have ſaid all the fine things they can of recitative muſick, are oblig'd to allow that it has declamatory ſpeaking for its foundation;

foundation; nay, they even own, that it has no real expreſſion but what it borrows from the voice which delivers the words that its muſick is adapted to: and it is another unlucky obſervation, that the ſame notes may ſerve very well for different words, and thoſe of very different ſenſe and meaning.

It is to be added to all this, that let the muſick be ever ſo well adapted to the paſſions concern'd, let it be ever ſo expreſſive, and let it be ever ſo perfectly perform'd by the ſinging actor, the world will never allow that a ſcene thus ſung to an audience, will keep up the appearance of a reality, and ſuſtain that illuſion which is the life of all playing, nearly ſo well as one in which the players ſpeak in their natural voice and accent.

The Abbé *du Bos*, another *Frenchman*, who has written with great ſucceſs on poetry and painting, has deliver'd it as his opinion, that the figures taught to the ancient Greek and Roman players, as their guides and directors in the delivery of the words of the poet, were not properly muſical notes, but were a kind of marks and ſignatures intended to expreſs thoſe elevations and depreſſions, and the other changes of the voice which the paſſions occaſion, in ſome degree, in common converſation. We know the reſpect that is due to the character of this writer, but we can by no means ſubſcribe to his opinion. He ſuppoſes that it is poſſible to aſcertain the ſtrength and expreſſion of the tones of the voice as agitated by the paſſions, and to proportion their degrees by rule, according to the degree of the emotion of the mind, which they are to be ſuppos'd to ariſe from; but all this is fairly overthrown by the before-mention'd *Condillac*, who has demonſtrated, beyond all contradiction, they can never be

be thus determin'd, as to their ſtrength; nor ever regulated by the proportion they bear to other given tones, which was the grand rule the Abbé *du Bos* had eſtabliſh'd for the aſcertaining their value.

There is not more falſity in this hypotheſis of the learned author, than in his other great ſuppoſition, That nature has allotted only one true tone of voice for the expreſſion of every ſingle paſſion.

This is an error that requires very little trouble in the refuting: Every man has a peculiar voice by which he may be known from every other man in the world, tho' his perſon be not ſeen; and in conſequence of this, every one has his own peculiar inflexion of voice, by which he expreſſes the impreſſions which he feels, and which conveys the idea he intends by it to others, only as it differs from the general tenor of his voice in plain ſpeaking.

There is no doubt, indeed, but the different inflexions which ariſe from the ſame impreſſion in the voices of different men, have ſomething in common to them all; but it muſt be alſo allowed, that they neceſſarily differ according to the different organs of the perſon who expreſſes himſelf by them; in the ſame manner as the accent and cadence of any particular nation, tho' it carry with it ſomething that diſtinguiſhes it in every ſpeaker from the accent of all other nations in the world, yet varies almoſt infinitely in the different perſons who ſpeak the dialects of the ſeveral provinces.

The tones of voice which fall under the conſideration of the actor have, beſides all theſe varieties, many others, which ariſe from the peculiar

liar characters of the perſons who expreſs themſelves by them. The anger of ſome men is a ſort thunder, which makes ten thouſand times more noiſe than is proportion'd to the miſchief it does; while that of others is a ſort of ſtill fire ſmother'd under the aſhes, which throws out no flames, but which is the more to be dreaded, as it gives no notice of the effects it is ready to produce.

It will be eaſily ſeen from theſe obſervations, that the art of delivering a ſentiment juſtly, or, as we otherwiſe call it, the truth of recitation, can never be treated methodically, or deliver'd in the form of a ſcience. In order to this, it would be neceſſary to lay down as many ſets of rules, as nature has given to mankind tones of voice, and different manners of expreſſing the ſame impreſſion. All the leſſons that the ableſt inſtructor would be able to give upon this art, would be of no more uſe to the performer, for whoſe aſſiſtance they were intended, than the deſcription, if it were poſſible to deſcribe it, of the manner in which Mrs. *Cibber* engages our affection, our tears, in the character of *Monimia*, (in which ſhe ſeems inſpir'd with the very genius of the author who wrote the part, and with the very ſoul of the heroine whom ſhe repreſents) would be to another actreſs, who would wiſh to ſucceed by imitation of that manner, tho' without the genius or the ſoul that gave exiſtence to it in the original.

If we would attempt to give the moſt infallible of all rules to the other performers, for the avoiding all falſe cadences, all improper tones in their delivery, and for giving us truth of recitation in every ſentence, it ought to be by adviſing them

to

to follow the example of that actreſs, and ſpeak as nearly as may be in the manner ſhe does, when ſhe performs parts which have ſome reſemblance to thoſe which they are to repreſent. Nothing could be more deſirable, in the generality of our actors, than attempts of this kind; but nothing can be more difficult, not to ſay impoſſible, than to ſucceed to any great degree in them. We can no more, in a continued diſcourſe, appropriate to ourſelves all the inflexions of voice that we have admired in another perſon, than we can invariably, for a long time together, ſpeak in an accent that is not natural to us. All that can be pretended to in this way, with any degree of ſucceſs, is to imitate, as nearly as that may be done, certain of the finer and more ſtriking cadences of thoſe performers, whoſe natural tone of voice is moſt like that of the perſo n is to attempt the imitation: as to the reſt, nature alone can dictate what will be moſt expreſſive; and the ſenſe of what is to be ſpoken is the only inſtructor which can diſcloſe the ſecrets of that eloquent magick of ſounds, by which the player is to excite in his audience all thoſe emotions which it is his buſineſs to make them feel.

The principal of all theſe ſecrets is, not to employ indifferently thoſe cadences, which tho' they are ſomething alike in ſound, yet are different enough to be made, with proper management, the means of diſtinguiſhing very different paſſions. The tones of the voice, under the command of the actor, may be rang'd under different genera, each of which is compos'd of a number of ſpecies, in the ſame manner as every one of the primitive

mitive colours divides itſelf into a multitude of different ſhades.

We may regard, for example, that tone by which we expreſs authority *, and that by which we expreſs pride, as both belonging to the ſame genus; but yet it is evident that theſe two have their differences one from the other. By the firſt, we very frequently expreſs no more than the juſt ſenſe which we have of our own dignity; but by the other, we are always to be underſtood to carry the opinion we have of our greatneſs, much beyond the bounds of truth and reality.

The tone of voice, peculiar to the ſimple creature who diſcloſes all his heart to every body he meets, is very like that in which the prudent but ingenuous man declares the truth in any affair he is interrogated upon. They are both evidently of the ſame genus; but it would be an egregious blunder to uſe, or to underſtand, one of them for the other. The firſt is the tone of a weak perſon, who having neither underſtanding nor reſolution enough to conceal his ſentiments, reveals every thought of his heart, even in caſes where it is his intereſt that they ſhould be un-

* It may be imagined by ſome, that we are here contradicting ourſelves on this head; and that after having aſſerted that there may be ſeveral true and juſt tones uſed to expreſs the ſame paſſion, we are here admitting only one to expreſs the ſenſe of greatneſs which a man in authority carries always about him. We muſt obſerve, that we here uſe the term collectively; and mean, tho' we ſpeak in the ſingular number, every tone that is proper to expreſs the ſentiment in queſtion; and the reader is deſired to underſtand the ſame, in regard to all the other tones which we are about to mention.

known:

known: the other is a ſign of candour, not of weakneſs or folly; and is generally the attribute of thoſe perſons who are ſufficiently maſters of themſelves to be able to diſguiſe their manner of thinking, or even their ſenſibility of accidents adverſe or fortunate, but whoſe innate honour and virtue will not ſuffer them to betray the truth.

There are ſome tones of the voice which are to be varied even under the ſame genus. The figure of ſpeech, which we call irony, may be equally dictated to us by anger, by contempt, or by mere mirth and good humour; but the ironical tone of voice, which is proper for the expreſſing one of theſe kind of ſentiments, is by no means proper to explain ourſelves by, when we mean either of the other two.

Love and friendſhip, in the ſame manner, frequently ſpeak the ſame language; but the tone of voice by which they are to be expreſſed, is by no means the ſame: even the tones in which the various kinds of friendſhip itſelf are to be deliver'd, differ extremely from one another. That by which a father expreſſes his tenderneſs and care for his favourite ſon, is very different from that by which the ſentiments of one friend are expreſſed to another no way related to him.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

What ought to be the Manner of Recitation in Comedy.

EXCEPTING only a very few inſtances, in which it is the buſineſs of the player to entertain his audience with an affected and intentionally ridiculous, declamatory manner, nothing in comedy is to be deliver'd in the way of declamation. It is a general, and, allowing only for a very few exceptions, an indiſpenſible rule, that the actor, in comedy, is to recite as naturally as poſſible: he is to deliver what he has to ſay, in the very ſame manner that he would have ſpoken it off the ſtage, if he had been in the ſame circumſtances in real life that the perſon he repreſents is plac'd in.

There is much leſs difficulty in conforming to this rule, in ſpeaking the parts in thoſe comedies which are written in what is now the uſual and natural manner, that is, in proſe, than there was in delivering the author's language in the ſame natural manner, when an abſurd cuſtom had, an age or two ago, made it neceſſary for the author to throw many at leaſt, if not all his ſpeeches, into verſe. In *France* the ſame ſpecies of folly, in a great meaſure, ſtill reigns; and tho' it is the intereſt of the actors there, if they know the value of their reputation, to ſpeak, for this reaſon, nothing but proſe, and notwithſtanding that among whole companies of their comedians, it is no uncommon thing not to have ſo much as one perſon who can ſpeak verſe decently; yet the whole company generally prefer the plays writ-

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ten in verſe; and this for no better reaſon, than that their parts in them are more eaſily remembered.

The *French* audiences alſo greatly help forward this falſe taſte, as the generality of them never fail to give the preference to a comedy written in verſe, tho' the poet has evidently both cramp'd himſelf, and thrown a thouſand difficulties in the way of the performer by writing it ſo.

It is not the buſineſs of a treatiſe of this kind to determine, whether the laws of poetry, ſo far as they regard verſification, belong to comedy, properly ſo call'd, or not; or whether there are ſome, and only ſome caſes in which they may, or ought to be admitted. Perhaps the judicious reader of thoſe comedies that have been written in it, will find, that one great reaſon for the author's adding this tinſel to his piece, has been his wanting ſterling merit to recommend it; and that one great thing that diſcountenanc'd proſe, among thoſe writers who ſet it on foot, was, that as it had only the wit it contain'd to recommend it, there requir'd more of that valuable commodity in it, than where there was ſomething that might amuſe the ear without it.

Nothing can be more evident, than that rhyme and meaſure always tend to take off greatly from the air of truth, nature and reality, which the dialogue would otherwiſe have. In conſequence of this, the actor's principal care and ſtudy ought to be, wherever he is encumber'd with theſe fetters, to break the one, and, as much as poſſible, ſink and loſe the other in the reciting. Several of our *Shakeſpear*'s and *Ben Johnſon*'s plays have paſſages in rhyme and meaſure, in ſome parts; and that excellent compoſition *Co-*

mus

mus abounds too much in them, in the character of the God of Revels; yet, to the honour of *Volpone* and *Comus*, we mean when Mr. *Quin* repreſents thoſe characters, perhaps it has not been found out by any body, that has not read as well as ſeen thoſe pieces, that there is a line in meaſure, or a ſingle rhyme in either of them.

We have had occaſion to ſpeak of this great player's delivering the invocation to *Cotytto*, in his character of *Comus* in another place, and that on another account. It may be added here, that this is one of thoſe paſſages in *Comus* where the rhyme breaks in upon the ſolemnity and ſenſe, and in which Mr. *Quin* wholly ſinks it upon us; delivering the words in their natural periods, without regard either to the jingle or to the meaſure; except that he preſerves ſo much of the laſt as is enough, without rendering his delivery forc'd or ſtiff, to keep up a peculiar ſmoothneſs and majeſty in it.

Another inſtance, in the ſame piece, is his courting the lady as ſhe ſits in the enchanted chair. The poet has thrown every thing that he here delivers, into rhyme and a peculiar meaſure, but Mr. *Quin* ſinks both in a great degree upon us, and by that means gives a majeſty to the ſenſe that it wants in every mouth beſide. Who, as we before obſerv'd, that had not read the piece, would find out the rhymes as he ſpeaks this;

Hence, loathed melancholy,
Of Cerberus and blackeſt midnight born,
In Stygian cave forlorn,
'Mongſt horrid ſhapes, and ſhrieks and ſighs unholy,
Find out ſome uncouth cell

Where

Where brooding darkneſs ſpreads his jealous wings,
And the night-raven ſings.
There, under Ebon ſhades, and low-brow'd rocks,
As ragged as thy locks,
In deep Cimmerian darkneſs ever dwell.
But come, thou goddeſs fair and free,
In heav'n yclep'd, Euphroſyne,
And by men, heart-eaſing mirth,
Whom lovely Venus at a birth,
With two ſiſter-graces more,
To ivy-crowned Bacchus bore.
Haſte thee, nymph, and bring with thee
Jeſt and youthful jollity:
Quips and cranks, and wanton wiles;
Nods and becks, and wreathed ſmiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple ſleek,
Sport that wrinkled care derides,
And laughter holding both his ſides.
Come, and trip it as you go,
On the light fantaſtic toe;
And in thy right-hand lead with thee
The mountain-nymph, ſweet Liberty.

The ſpirit with which this player delivers this truly poetical ſpeech, is ſuch, as perhaps never was, or will be equal'd; and we hardly know whether moſt to admire, that or his judgment, in the peculiar article we have been treating of, the making us loſe the rhyme, which here would add a ſtiffneſs to what the poet meant, and making it the freeſt ſpeech in the world. There is another, in the ſame ſcene, yet more ſeverely loaded with the double chain of rhyme and meaſure; it is even thrown into the ſtanza's and alternate rhyme of a ballad; yet the art

art of this player almoſt entirely throws off both, and gives the true force and dignity to the ſentiment contained in it, that it would have had if deliver'd in proſe. The paſſage we mean is, his addreſs to the lady after the entertainment his magic had given her.

Caſt thine eyes around and ſee
How from ev'ry element,
Nature's ſweets are cull'd for thee,
And her choiceſt bleſſings ſent.
Fire, water, earth, and air combine
To compoſe the rich repaſt;
Their aid the diſtant ſeaſons join,
To court thy ſmell, thy ſight, thy taſte.
Hither ſummer, autumn, ſpring,
Hither all your tributes bring;
Here on bended knee be ſeen
Doing homage to your queen.

If we would ſee a beauty of this kind, ſet off in its true light and value by compariſon, let us recollect the under players acting in one of *Lee*'s tragedies. Whoever has ſeen *Hannibal's Overthrow* has found that ſome, tho' very good players, and particularly excellent in their characters there, have not the addreſs to keep the unnatural jingle of the rhyme out of their ears, even in ſome of the moſt paſſionate ſcenes; but the ſubalterns never fail to give it us ſtrong at every tenth ſyllable, let the ſenſe fare as it can. The *Tag*, in the *Orphan*, famous for having been ſpoke in this manner,

To his temptation lewdly ſhe inclin'd
Her ſoul, and for an apple damn'd mankind,

was alſo for a long time deliver'd, by ſucceſſive players, with ſuch a religious obſervance of the rhyme, that there was almoſt as abſolute a ſtop at the end of one of the lines, as at that of the other.

A more modern inſtance, and one which we wiſh to ſee mended, as it is of the number of the few things that diſpleaſe us in a very pleaſing play, is that of the *Friar* in *Romeo and Juliet*, who enters, at his morning employ of gathering medicinal herbs for the uſe of the poor, with theſe lines.

The grey-ey'd morn ſmiles on the frowning night,
Cheq'ring the eaſtern clouds with ſtreaks of light;
Now ere the ſun advance his burning eye
The day to chear, or night's dank dew to dry,
I muſt fill up this oſier cage of ours
With potent herbs, and precious juiced flow'rs.
Mighty is the powerful grace that lies
In herbs, trees, ſtones, and their true qualities:
For nought ſo vile that on the earth doth live,
But to the earth ſome ſpecial good doth give;
Nor ought ſo good but, ſtrain'd from its fair uſe,
Revolts to vice, and ſtumbles on abuſe.

The poet, according to the faſhion of the times, has thrown this into rhyme; but we do not want the player to put us in continual mind of that blemiſh, or to preſerve what we wiſh had not been exhibited: we dare pronounce it, that if the actor we have mentioned before had theſe lines to ſpeak, their ſenſe would affect the audience as much more than it at preſent does, as the rhyme would be leſs diſtinguiſh'd.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

Whether Tragedy ought or ought not to be ſpoke in a declamatory manner.

PERHAPS, among all the queſtions that have been or may be ſtarted upon the ſubject of the player's profeſſion, there is no one about which the world is leſs agreed than this, Whether or not declamation be a proper manner of ſpeaking for the performer in tragedy? The occaſion of all the diverſity of opinions which we meet with on this head, however, rather ariſes from diſputes about words than about things; and many who ſtrenuouſly oppoſe the deciſions of one another on the ſubject, only do it becauſe they underſtand the terms *declamatory* and *declamation* in a different ſenſe from one another.

Thoſe who argue the moſt ſtrongly againſt this manner of delivery in tragedy, in general underſtand by declamatory ſpeaking, that unmeaning recitation, that unnatural and monotonous delivery which too many of our ſecond rate players have fallen into; and which, as it is not dictated by nature, may indeed deafen and weary the ears of an audience, but can never ſpeak either to the underſtanding or to the heart.

Declamatory ſpeaking of this kind ought to be baniſh'd from every part, from every kind of tragedy; but our modern criticks, who, to avoid this extreme, run into the other contrary one of aſſerting that the verſe of tragedy can never be ſpoke too familiarly, or brought too near to com-

mon converſation, forget that they are by this means robbing the tragic muſe of a great part of her native and appropriated majeſty, which in many caſes, tho' not in all, is to be kept up by the dignity of accent in the ſpeaker. There was a time indeed when every thing in tragedy, if it was but the delivering a common meſſage, was ſpoken in high heroics; but of late years this abſurdity has been in a great meaſure baniſh'd from the *Engliſh*, as well as from the *French* ſtage. The *French* owe this rational improvement in their tragedy to *Baron* and Madam *Cauvreur*, and we to that excellent player Mr. *Macklin:* the pains he took while entruſted with the care of the actors at *Drury-Lane*, and the attention which the ſucceſs of thoſe pains acquir'd him from the now greateſt actors of the *Engliſh* theatre, have founded for us a new method of the delivering tragedy from the firſt rate actors, and baniſh'd the bombaſt that us'd to wound our ears continually from the mouths of the ſubordinate ones, who were eternally aiming to mimic the majeſty that the principal performers employ'd on ſcenes that were of the utmoſt conſequence, in the delivery of the moſt ſimple and familiar phraſes, adapted to the trivial occaſions which were afforded them to ſpeak on.

It is certain that the players ought very carefully to avoid a too loſty and ſonorous delivery when a ſentiment only, not a paſſion, is to be expreſs'd: it ought alſo, as the excellent inſtructer juſt mention'd us'd eternally to be inculcating into his pupils, to be always avoided when a ſimple recital of facts was the ſubſtance of what was to be ſpoken, or when pure and cool reaſoning was the ſole meaning of the ſcene:

but

but tho' he baniſh'd noiſe and vehemence on theſe occaſions, he allow'd that on many others, the pompous and ſounding delivery were juſt, nay were neceſſary in this ſpecies of playing, and that no other manner of pronouncing the words was fit to accompany the thought the author expreſſed by them, or able to convey it to the audience in its intended and proper dignity.

For the ſame reaſon that induces many people who wholly condemn meaſure in comedy, to admit and recommend it in tragedy, we are of opinion that a more elevated and pompous manner of expreſſion is proper in the latter, than is to be ſuffered in the former.

When a piece of any kind is read to us, we are not ſatisfy'd with the perſon who reads it, if he does not accommodate his tone of voice to the nature of the matter of the treatiſe; and even in common converſation we find no fault with an oratorial tone, provided the ſubject be of importance. The native majeſty of many parts of almoſt every tragedy require, for the ſame reaſon, that the performer deliver them not in a common tone of voice, but with a dignity which extremely well becomes ſuch ſentiments, tho' it would be abſurd if miſapply'd to trifles; nay, even in the other parts of a well written tragedy, we are not much hurt by a majeſty of delivery, provided that the ſtate and dignity of the ſpeaker be ſuch as ſet him in a very conſpicuous light, and place him much above the vulgar.

We are naturally apt to regard the antient heroes of *Greece* and *Rome* with a peculiar reſpect, imbib'd with our earlieſt education, and to eſteem them as it were a ſpecies of men different from, and plac'd above ourſelves; we therefore are not

ſurpriz'd to hear a *Cato* or a *Pyrrhus* deliver himſelf in a manner far more majeſtic than the uſual form of ſpeech.

The pompous form of delivering tragedy is yet more peculiarly adapted to certain parts in thoſe plays in which the events are taken from the ſtories of the heroic ages: without doubt the player ought, in all things, to keep within proper bounds; he is not, even in theſe caſes, to go vaſtly beyond nature: all that is to be allow'd him, is to ſhew us theſe ſcenes in a decent magnificence. Perhaps it is for this reaſon that no man ever did, or probably ever will, play the part of *Comus* with the ſame ſucceſs that Mr. *Quin* has done: notwithſtanding that his perſon and age are very improper for the repreſentation of a gay, young, and wanton god of revels; the majeſty of his voice, and that pomp and dignity which he has been able to give to the declarations of that deity, charm and aſtoniſh us, and help in a great meaſure to keep up the illuſion. The poet intended repreſenting the character Mr. *Quin* plays in this maſque, not as a man but ſomething greater. The *French* have likewiſe had an inſtance of a like kind in a character they have lately much admir'd, and which being a magic power rais'd far above the ordinary pitch of human nature, they heard, with a juſt applauſe, rais'd alſo above mere nature in the ſpeaking: the character we mean is *Medea*. When this ſorcereſs is lamenting the abſence of her faithleſs huſband, the actreſs who repreſented her on that ſtage ſpeaks like another woman; but when ſhe enters on the ſolemn rites of her myſteries, when ſhe invokes the triple Hecate, and whirls along the air with her dragons, it was with the higheſt admiration that they

they heard the actreſs raiſe her voice to ſomething more than mortal, and thunder out her menaces.

CHAP. VII.

Of certain Obſtacles which impair the Truth of the Recitation.

ONE of the greateſt obſtacles we have to complain of on this account is an unlucky habit which too many of our players have fallen into, of ſtraining their voices. When a man does not play in his natural tone, it is hardly poſſible that he ſhould play with truth: if the performers were themſelves ſenſible but of half the miſchief this unnatural trick does them, they would take infinite pains to keep within their compaſs. The very beſt voice may be render'd inharmonious by being carry'd beyond its pitch, and where there is any natural imperfection in the organ, it becomes vaſtly more ſenſible in every ſtrain, than it can be in ſpeaking within compaſs. We have ſeveral voices at this time upon the ſtage, which, in their medium, are not diſagreeable, but which, when the performer chuſes to ſtretch them beyond their pitch, become inſupportable to the ear.

Another powerful obſtacle to the truth of a player's recitation, is monotony. Of this fault in delivery there are properly three kinds: firſt, a continual perſeverance in the ſame modulation of voice; ſecondly, a too great reſemblance in the cloſes of periods or ſpeeches; and thirdly, a too frequent repetition of the ſame inflexions.

The firſt of theſe kinds of monotony is much more general in this age than it is commonly ſuppoſed to be, and is equally the fault of our players in comedy and in tragedy: a great number of the preſent race of actors are from this fault eternally piping out the ſame tune, like thoſe little wind inſtruments with which people teach birds to ſing. The ſecond kind is yet more common among our actors than the firſt, but it is in a manner peculiar to tragedy; the very people who play in comedy with ſome ſort of natural cadence, frequently when they have blank verſe put into their mouths, take up a ſort of cant tone, and ſeem to think it a duty to cloſe every ſentence with an octave below. We are ſorry to bear hard upon the other ſex; but as every thing that carries the face of cenſure here is not meant as raillery but as hints for improvement, we cannot but obſerve that the actreſſes in tragedy are more faulty in this kind of monotony than the performers of the other ſex; and that ſome who are now but in a midling rank upon the ſtage would riſe much higher, in the judgments of all thoſe who are worth pleaſing, if they could break themſelves of this abſurd and unnatural cuſtom. We have already mention'd a *Lavinia* who charm'd us very little leſs than the *Coliſta* of the ſame play, tho' confeſſedly the greateſt actreſs on the preſent ſtage; but this happen'd only once from this lady; the next time it was our fate to ſee her, all the pleaſing and ſenſible variety of her voice was loſt, every period cloſed alike, and the fineſt language that was ever yet put into the mouth of a woman, that of the *Lady* in *Comus*, became lifeleſs and inſipid. The actreſs hinted at will pardon the freedom of this remark, which would

would not have been deliver'd, but from the remembrance that ill habits newly contracted are eaſily removed.

The players in comedy are very rarely to be reproached with the third ſpecies of monotony, the too frequent repetitions of the ſame inflexions of voice; but we find thoſe who perform in tragedy have a great deal of trouble to guard againſt it: where the numbers and meaſure are the ſame, it is very natural that the pronunciation ſhould run into the ſame equality; and the neceſſity that the performers in the modern tragedy are under, from time to time, of delivering with a pompous accent a long chain of blank verſes, expoſes them too much to it.

It would be a very obvious piece of advice on this occaſion, eſpecially to the younger actors, to avoid as much as poſſible reſting at the end of a line; but it would not be equally juſt. Verſe is the natural language of tragedy; and tho' where the ſenſe continues, the meaſure is not to command a ſtop, yet when it is equal where to pauſe, ſome preference ought generally to be given to the obſervance of it.

It is otherwiſe indeed in our tragedies which are written in rhyme, as was the faſhion an age or two ago; in theſe the judicious ſpeaker, as in the like unnatural paſſages in comedy, ſinks the rhyme wherever the obſervance of the ſenſe pleads at all for his doing it; and we ſee enough of the folly and abſurdity of the contrary practice in ſome of our ſubordinate people, who in *Hannibal's Overthrow*, and the like plays, through an entire abſence of both taſte and judgment, pay that reſpect to the number of ſyllables and jingle of rhimes, which the ſenſe pines for want of.

When we propoſe to theſe people to pay more reſpect to the connexion of ideas and cloſes of the ſenſe, than to that ſound and meaſure which theſe have been forc'd into; we do not mean that it is an invariable law that they are never to ſtop at the end of a line: we are very ſenſible that it is not only convenient and proper, but neceſſary. The poet has frequently cloſed his ſenſe ſo, and we have daily opportunities of obſerving, even in Mr. *Quin*, who hates the jingling tag of an act in comedy as much as any man can do, that tho' the rhime may often be ſunk, yet it cannot be always ſo.

In tragedies where the lines do not rhyme, the poet is often blameable for forcing a ſort of monotony upon the performer which he can no way avoid: when the author carefully delivers a ſentence in every line; and brings the ſenſe to a period with every tenth ſyllable, the actor is in a manner compell'd to deliver whole ſpeeches in the ſame tone and cadence, and to make a ſort of recitative of it, tho' a very inharmonious one. Perhaps there is not a fault in the whole compaſs of the player's ſphere more difficultly avoided than this; the beſt rule we can give for the preventing it, is, to obſerve the conduct of Mr. *Garrick* in the like circumſtances: in ſome of the characters which he is not a little fond of, there is this ſort of preſcription for monotony in many places; every verſe is a ſentence, and every one ſeems to require to be ſpoken with the ſame pauſe at its end; but with what addreſs and caution does this maſterly player avoid the ſnare? he lengthens or ſhortens the pauſe at every period, according to the circumſtances, ſo that the reſts are too much varied from one another to affect the ear as the ſame thing:

thing: he delivers an equal number of ſyllables in two ſucceeding lines in very unequal time; and while he gives a more than common force to ſuch paſſages as will bear it, he delivers others of more familiar import with a naked ſimplicity, which, tho' the very reverſe of that pomp we generally expect in tragedy, is not leſs juſt or affecting. In this conduct of Mr. *Garrick* there is a leſſon for the players of ſucceeding ages, for raiſing the charms of variety on the moſt barren parts of their author, and for making every thing pleaſe: we ſay, to the players of ſucceeding ages; for thoſe of the preſent find it much eaſier to admire than imitate the models we have propoſed to them to form themſelves by.

We are not to cloſe this article of monotony without doing the ſame ſort of juſtice to the other great player of the age, Mr. *Quin*, that we have here done to Mr. *Garrick*; it is the more peculiarly neceſſary in this part, becauſe this maſter in the art has been accuſed by many people of this very fault. We are fond of finding blemiſhes in the brighteſt characters, and the love of defamation at preſent runs ſo high among us, that we ſeem incapable of throwing it off, even tho' we are to purchaſe it at the expence of our own reputation. Let a man mention the name of Mr. *Quin* in company in the manner in which that name deſerves to be mentioned, and 'tis more than ten thouſand to one but the ſucceeding ſentence, let who will utter it, has the word *Monotony* in it: we are apt to believe, however, that the people who accuſe this gentleman of this fault, are not well acquainted with what it is: we have here eſtabliſhed three kinds of it, a diſtinction which they perhaps had not thought of; yet, we

declare Mr. *Quin* to be no more guilty of any one of them, than Mr. *Garrick* or Mr. *Barry*.

If theſe people mean that Mr. *Quin* is always Mr. *Quin* and never Mr. *Garrick*, or that Mr. *Garrick* is always Mr. *Garrick* and never Mr. *Quin*, we agree with them that they both certainly have ſo much monotony; they have each, as every man elſe has, a peculiar tone of voice, which neither of them will ever be able to throw off, or to aſſume that of the other in its place: but if they mean that Mr. *Quin* pronounces different ſentiments with the ſame cadence, nothing was ever more unjuſt or ungrateful.

We have taken upon us, thro' the courſe of this work, the part of a wholly impartial and unprejudic'd judge, and as ſuch cannot but deliver it as our opinion, that Mr. *Quin* is the player, who, of all we at preſent know or can remember to have ſeen, has the moſt variety: if it is obſerv'd, that thro' the whole part of *Cato* he has a ſort of ſameneſs in his manner and delivery, we readily acknowlege it: we doubt not but this, tho' aſcrib'd to him as a fault, has been a more labour'd thing than the greateſt variety that we ſee either in him or in any body elſe, in any part that requires it; and we eſteem it a much greater beauty.

Let us remember what *Cato* was, and we ſhall not blame the actor who repreſents him for not changing with every circumſtance. A great part of the character in *Tamerlane* is of the ſame kind, and we ſee this excellent player in all that part keep up the ſame ſort of equality in his voice and manner; but let thoſe who have not judg-

ment

ment enough to diſtinguiſh between faults and beauties, and who condemn this as of the firſt kind, obſerve with how much prudence he changes his manner, when in this part he feels the impreſſions of a growing love, or a growing anger, both which, tho' he ſuppreſſes in time, yet he firſt ſhews the effects of; and they will acknowlege that his variety in theſe parts of the character, ſhew, that he could have uſed the ſame ſort of charm every where elſe in it if he pleas'd.

This is then throwing the blame upon the judgment of Mr. *Quin*, not upon his natural qualifications; and when we find that the people who make the objection have more judgment in playing than the perſon they cenſure, we ſhall believe there may be ſomething in the accuſation.

If to keep up the ſpirit of a character, not only by the look, geſture, and manner, but even by the tone of voice, where there is no contrary indication from the paſſions, be to fall into the crime of *monotony*, we do allow Mr. *Quin* to be guilty of it in the higheſt degree; but if the varying the voice and deportment as often as the change of ſentiments, of circumſtances, or of perſons require it, be to be various as much as a player ought to be, we cannot but give him this praiſe, and congratulate ourſelves that he is no more ſo.

We readily acknowlege that where the author has thought proper to put a chain of ſentences of the ſame kind into the mouth of that player, he delivers them in the ſame manner; we own it, and we praiſe him for it; nay, we have ventur'd to blame ſome of the greateſt actors of the age for affecting to do otherwiſe: when the ſame

ſpeech requires variety, or where the different parts of the ſame character give us the repreſentation of different paſſions, who is, we will not ſay more vary'd, but who is ſo much, ſo very different from himſelf as this performer?

If he is thus full of variety where neceſſary in the ſeveral parts of the ſame character, how vaſtly more ſo is he in the different characters he plays! Theſe plead loudly againſt this charge of monotony as a natural imperfection in him, as they are as various as can be ſelected from the whole compaſs of our dramatic writings. Will any man ſuppoſe that the player has a natural and unalterable ſameneſs in his voice and manner who performs two ſo different parts as thoſe of *Cato* and Sir *John Falſtaff*, and both equally well; both ſo well, that the greateſt players of the age have never dar'd to put themſelves upon the compariſon with him in either of them.

If any one ſuſpect Mr. *Quin* of too much ſameneſs in his manner in *Cato*, let them ſuſpend their judgment till they have ſeen him in *Jaques*; let them attend to his deſcription of the fool:

A fool, a fool, I met a fool i'th' foreſt,
As I do live by food, a motley fool,
Who laid him down and baſk'd him in the ſun,
And rail'd at Lady *Fortune* in good terms,
In good ſet terms, and yet a motley fool.
Good-morrow, fool, quoth I.——No, ſir, quoth he,
Call me not fool till heaven hath ſent me fortune:
And then he drew a dial from his poak,
And, looking on it with lack-luſtre eye,
Says very gravely, It is ten o'clock.

Thus

Thus may we ſee, quoth he, how the world
wags;
'Tis but an hour ago that it was nine,
And in another hour 'twill be eleven;
And ſo from hour to hour we ripe and ripe,
And then from hour to hour we rot and rot,
And thereby hangs a tale.—When I did hear
The motley fool thus moral on the time,
My lungs began to crow like chanticleer,
That fools ſhould be ſo deep contemplative;
And I did laugh ſans intermiſſion
An hour by his dial. O noble fool!
O worthy fool! motley's the only ware.

Every body that is free from prejudice will allow that there is more variety in Mr. *Quin's* ſpeaking this, than any player we are able to remember ever gave his audience in barely telling a ſtory, for this is no more; tho' ſo well given by the poet, and ſo happily deliver'd by this player, that it gives us a greater variety of pleaſure than we find almoſt any where in the ſame number of lines.

The part we are mentioning abounds with beauties; and this actor does not fail to give them all their true luſtre. To give an additional inſtance from the ſame play, let us call to mind his manner of delivering that never too often to be repeated deſcription of the ſeveral ſtages of human life:

All the world's a ſtage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And each man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being ſeven ages.—At firſt the infant,
Mewling

Mewling and puking in its nurſe's arms.
And then the whining ſchool-boy with his ſatchel,
And ſhining morning face, creeping like ſnail
Unwillingly to ſchool. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace with a doleful ballad
Made to his miſtreſs' eye-brow. Then a ſoldier,
Full of ſtrange oaths and bearded like a pard,
Jealous in honour, ſudden, quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the juſtice,
In fair round belly with good capon lin'd,
Full of wiſe ſaws and modern inſtances,
And ſo he plays his part. The ſixth age ſhifts
Into the lean and ſlipper'd pantaloon,
With ſpectacles on noſe, and pouch at ſide,
His youthful hoſe, well ſav'd, a world too wide
For his ſhrunk ſhanks; and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childiſh treble pipes,
And whiſtles in the ſound. Laſt ſcene of all,
That ends this ſad eventful hiſtory,
Is ſecond childiſhneſs, and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, ſans eyes, ſans taſte, ſans every thing.

Whoever remembers his ſpeaking this, remembers one of the greateſt things ever executed upon the ſtage: the maſterly manner in which he throws off the meaſure in theſe lines has no ſmall merit; but the inimitable beauty with which he delivers the ſeveral parts is ſuch as one would think muſt have ſham'd every body out of the charge of monotony againſt him, and eſtabliſh'd him as the ſtandard of true and rational variety.

If there can be thought to be any occaſion for a farther inſtance of this beauty in this great player, let us remember him in the *Spaniſh Fryar*, and recollect the change of his tone and accent, while he is threatening the *Colonel*, and when the palliating purſe of guineas has been drop'd before him; or when we have thought of his *Othello*, let us remember his Sir *John Falſtaff*: with what inimitable ſpirit, humour, and variety, does he deliver that excellent account *Shakeſpear* has given of his ſoldiers,

" If I be not aſham'd of my ſoldiers I am a ſows'd gurnet; I miſus'd the king's preſs-money moſt damnably: I have got, in exchange for an hundred and fifty ſoldiers, three hundred and odd pounds. I preſs me none but good houſe-holders, yeomen's ſons: enquire me out contracted batchellors, ſuch as have been aſk'd twice on the banns, ſuch a commodity of warm ſlaves, who had as lieve hear the devil as a drum, ſuch as fear the report of a culverin worſe than a ſtruck fowl or a hurt wild-duck; I preſs me none but ſuch toaſts and butter, with hearts in their bellies no bigger than pins heads; and they have bought out their ſervices, and now my whole charge conſiſts of antients, corporals, lieutenants, and gentlemen of companies, ſlaves as ragged as *Lazarus* in the painted cloth, where the glutton's dogs lick'd his ſores; ſuch as indeed were never ſoldiers, but diſcarded ſerving men, younger ſons to younger brothers, unjuſt tapſters and oſtlers trade-fallen, the calm cankers of a quiet world and long peace, ten times more diſhonourably ragged than an old-fac'd antient; ſuch have I to fill up the rooms of ſuch as have bought out their ſervices.

You wou'd think I had an hundred and fifty tatter'd prodigals juſt come from ſwine-keeping; from eating draff and huſks. A mad fellow met me on the way and told me, I had been unloading all the gibbets and had preſs'd the dead bodies. No eye hath ſeen ſuch ſcare-crows—I'll not march with them thro' *Coventry*, that's flat: nay, and the villains march wide betwixt the legs as if they had gyves on, for indeed I had the moſt of them out of priſon———. There's but a ſhirt and a half in my whole company, and the half ſhirt is two napkins tack'd together, and thrown over the ſhoulders like a herald's coat without ſleeves: and the ſhirt, to ſay truth, was ſtolen from the hoſt at St. *Alban*'s, or the reduc'd innkeeper of *Daintry*; but that's all one, they'll find linen enough on every hedge."

Never was there more room for humour and variety in the player than in this famous ſpeech, and never was there ſo much of either ſhewn in it as by the perſon we are celebrating in this part. We wiſh the charge of fameneſs in deportment in all characters, which ſome are apt to lay againſt another great player, could as juſtly or as eaſily be got over as the injudicious charge of monotony againſt Mr. *Quin* is by theſe, and might be by a thouſand other inſtances.

We are alſo to reckon, among the number of the cauſes of falſe recitation, or a vicious delivery in our actors, the reigning paſſion that moſt of them have for ſome particular manner of playing: if they ſuppoſe they have merit in any one thing, they will not reſt till they introduce that ſort of merit into every part, even into things the moſt oppoſite and contradictory: if they have been told they

they pronounced their ſentences well in one ſpeech, they will be ſure to pronounce every ſpeech in the ſame manner, be the ſubſtance or ſenſe of it ever ſo different from that of the firſt. We have at preſent an actreſs among us who has the ſecret of affecting an audience beyond moſt people, in places where the poet has meant to touch them to the heart, with the diſtreſs of the character ſhe plays; ſhe is not contented with this praiſe when ſhe has room to deſerve it, but will be attempting to make every paſſage ſhe ſpeaks, even the moſt indifferent, moving and affecting; and becauſe ſhe has been told that there is a peculiar beauty in her manner of ſheding tears, ſhe would, by her own good will, be always crying.

Every tender paſſage appears to her to be the ſame thing, of whatever character it makes a part; and we have the mortification to find the miſchief ſpreading wide among the reſt of the people of the ſame houſe. Whoever has of late attended the tragedies there, cannot but have perceived that the men are getting into the ſame melancholy turn. 'Tis in vain that the poets have made tenderneſſes of a thouſand kinds, they have but one manner of expreſſing them all; they ſhew only the ſoftneſs and diſtreſs of their part, when there is requir'd a force and dignity, even in the ſorrow that is confeſſed in it; they are wafting their ſighs to us, when they ought to be expreſſing the ſevereſt tranſports of their rage and vengeance, together with their grief; and they lament and bemoan themſelves like ſhepherds who have loſt a lamb, when the poet meant that they ſhould grieve like exil'd kings, whoſe ſubjects ſuffered under uſurping tyrants.

Others

Others we have among the actors of ſome credit and character at preſent, who have a great deal of feeling coupled with very little judgment, and who conſequently can never find the art of moderating, with any degree of propriety, the emotions which the redundance of this good quality throws them into. The actors of this ſort are frequently very ſeverely blam'd for faults which the exceſs only of what is right in itſelf occaſion in them: they are ever carrying too far the expreſſion of the principal paſſion they are to feel; they employ all that vehemence and ardour, which is neceſſary and laudable in the more intereſting parts of the character, into every ſcene tho' ever ſo indifferent; and ſacrifice truth and reaſon, in an idle hope of giving an unnatural energy to their acting.

However violent the love of *Torriſmond* may be for the fair *Leonora*, that heroe, when ſpeaking to his friends and confidents, tho' he has occaſion to mention his paſſion to them, is not to raiſe himſelf to all that tranſport and energy which it is proper he ſhould uſe when ſpeaking to the queen of *Arragon*, or when avowing his love in the face of his inſolent and haughty rival.

The higheſt inſtance which perhaps the world ever ſaw of the uſe of that judicious moderation of the paſſions, according to the variation of the circumſtances of the part, (the want of which we have ſo much reaſon to lament on the *Engliſh* ſtage,) was that which ſome years ago charm'd the *French* audiences for a long ſucceſſion of nights, in the character of *Penelope*.

There is no doubt but a ſettled melancholy ought to be a peculiar characteriſtic of that diſtreſs'd princeſs; ſhe is very judiciouſly thrown by the

the author into a ſtate of ſorrow till the very hour of *Ulyſſes*'s return; yet, as the circumſtances of her misfortunes differ in the ſeveral parts of the play, the judicious actreſs who perform'd this favourite part perceived that there might be great merit in moderating her griefs inſenſibly, as the occaſions of them leſſen'd. The nearer that play approaches toward a concluſion, the more the terrors of *Penelope* abate, and the more her ſorrow ought to abate alſo: in the firſt act ſhe has the abſence of a huſband and that of an only ſon to lament; but in the ſecond, her ſon is reſtor'd to her; and, ſoon after the return of *Telemachus*, ſhe receives certain information that *Ulyſſes* himſelf is alſo living; her grief therefore is to diminiſh all the way as the cauſes of it are taken off; and, in fine, it is not to be ſuppoſed that her deſpair ſhould expreſs itſelf in the ſame manner when ſhe has nothing to fear but the infidelity of her huſband, as when ſhe ſuppoſed him dead.

The younger players are more apt to be guilty of the fault we have been mentioning, as oppoſite to this excellence, than thoſe who better underſtand their profeſſion; but even theſe latter very often fall into one that is little leſs abſurd; that is, when there is any affecting circumſtance that concerns the character they repreſent, they do not take the pains to regulate the ſenſation they have of it, by the nature of the character that is ſuppoſed to feel it, but give us, inſtead of that, the manner in which themſelves would have felt it.

The character of *Marcia* in *Cato*, tho' a very fine one as deliver'd from the hands of the author, has been very ſeldom repreſented to us in its native beauty; the actreſſes have not felt the different emoti-

emotions of love of their admirer and love of their country, as *Cato*'s daughter would have felt them, but as themſelves would; and have therefore miſs'd all the noble ſtruggles that the author has painted to us between thoſe two paſſions: ſome who have repreſented this character have given up wholly to love and tenderneſs, others to patriotiſm and the care and concern for the dangers of their country; the one ſet have made love wholly triumph over patriotiſm, which is abſurd in the daughter of *Cato*; and the other have made patriotiſm wholly triumph over love, which is equally abſurd in the miſtreſs of ſo amiable a prince as *Juba*.

According to their manner of playing, this *Roman* lady is either wholly devoted to love, or elſe ſhe has no ſenſe of it at all; and by this means they either make their character a *Roman* without that univerſal paſſion, the love of her country, or elſe an unnaturally frozen miſtreſs, where every paſſion ſubmits to reaſon and reflexion: what we ſee is not the *Marcia* whom *Addiſon* drew equally virtuous and tender; diſtracted at the thought of the approaching ruin of her country, and at the ſame time pining for a lover with all the merit ſhe could wiſh to find in man; at a time when to indulge a paſſion of that kind were monſtrous, when to be happy were to be criminal.

If the play of thoſe actors who are tolerably well acquainted with the nature of their profeſſion is not always juſt and true, what an infinity of contradictions and abſurdities does one obſerve in the performance of thoſe who are but young upon the ſtage; and eſpecially of thoſe who have wanted education, or opportunities of converſing among people in high life, whoſe characters

ters alone are like thoſe which they are to repreſent upon the ſtage. We have ſeen an eminent inſtance of this want of deportment in a young fellow famous for one of the qualities neceſſary to a player, aſſurance, and rais'd by that ſole merit to the honour of performing *Hamlet* on one of our ſtages. It will not be neceſſary to give many inſtances of the idea this young man had of the deportment of a prince, after we have mention'd that to prepare himſelf for the famous ſoliloquy in that character which begins with, *To be, or not to be, that is the queſtion*; at the end of the ſecond line he took occaſion to unload one of his noſtrils, by blowing it upon the floor, while he held a finger againſt the other; and after ſupplying the buſineſs of a handkerchief, by wiping that finger on his breeches, went very deliberately on with the ſpeech.

CHAP. VIII.

Of the Care that ought to be taken perfectly to implant the Parts of a Play in the Actor's Memory, in order to its being play'd with Truth.

THE farther we advance in the examination of the art of performing dramatic writings on the ſtage, the more we find that a ſpirit of diſcernment, and a piercing judgment are neceſſary, among other qualifications, to every perſon who would become famous in it. We ſhould alſo remember, at the ſame time, how faithful, and how manageable the memory of the players ought to be; ſince it is never to be faulty, or to leave them in want of what to ſay; nor is it, on the the other hand, ever to be ſuffer'd to be ſo viſibly

ſibly prevalent in them, that we perceive its furniſhing them with the ſentences which we admire as they proceed from their mouths. The great pleaſure we have from ſeeing a play acted, rather than from hearing it read, is owing to the keeping up the illuſion, the appearance of a reality in the former circumſtance; and that this may be kept up to us by the actor, it is neceſſary, that what he delivers ſhou'd ſeem the reſult of the occurrences that have occaſioned it, not a part of a leſſon got by rote, to be repeated to us at proper periods.

It is a very common thing among the *Italian* comedians, in their more ludicrous ſcenes, to fill up their part with ſomething ſpoke off hand, and not only unwritten, but even unpremeditated. The geſtures with which they accompany this ſort of pleaſantry, often cheat us into a laugh at a very ſorry joke; but yet people ſee their performances with pleaſure: they accept of truth in the place of wit, and are very well contented with knowing that whatever the ſcene wants in eloquence it has in nature. Tho' we are ſenſible that there are not quite ſo many good things ſaid in one of theſe ſcenes, as in one of our own more regularly perform'd ones; we cannot but be pleaſed, at the ſame time, at the height the illuſion is kept up to, while we are ſenſible that it is in a great meaſure real life, not an imaginary repreſentation of it, that we are attending to.

This crime in actors, if it be one, is not peculiar to that nation; we have had inſtances of it among ourſelves. Our celebrated *Norris* had introduc'd a thouſand occaſional pleaſantries into every one of the ridiculous characters he was famous for playing; and wou'd ſeldom be prevail'd with

with to take much pains about acting a new part; he only made himſelf maſter of the heads and matter of it, and of the ſenſe of the whole play; his own genius for drollery ſupply'd the reſt; and if the author rav'd at the abuſe, the audience never fail'd to be pleas'd with it.

We live, 'tis true, in an age of criticiſm in which nothing of this kind is ſuffer'd; but perhaps if ſome of the modern farces which have been cram'd down our throats had been play'd off in the ſame manner, the delicacy of theſe gentlemen wou'd have been full as little ſhock'd as it has been at the repreſentation of them as they were written.

It is indeed indiſputable that the dramatic writings of a man of wit and genius, as they are ſtudied and regular, are infinitely preferable to the impertinent additions that a player can be able to make to them extempore; but the imperfection of the human memory is one great obſtacle to our ſeeing plays thus regularly compos'd, perform'd with all the advantages we cou'd wiſh. When an actor's remembrance ſerves him but imperfectly, he is liable to be confounded and puzzled in the midſt of the moſt intereſting ſcenes; and even when it ſerves him faithfully, but that at the expence of infinite labour and difficulty, we continually ſee the great care of recollecting what he is next to ſay ſtamp'd in his forehead, while he is delivering to us what ought to employ his whole attention.

The great care of the player ſhou'd be to let us ſee nothing of himſelf, but every thing of his character, while he is on the ſtage. We are vext to ſee that Mr. *Garrick* in *Iago*, in *Othello*; and in king *Lear*, as well

as

as in *Abel Drugger*: We wou'd, if it were poſſible, have the identity, nay the exiſtence of the man ſunk upon us in the repreſentation, and have only the General or the Villain, the Monarch or the Fool ſhewn to us.

How ſhall an actor be able to ſucceed in thus hiding himſelf under the covert of his character, if we continually perceive that he is only repeating to us ſomething that he has before got by rote for that purpoſe? Nay, to go farther, how is it poſſible for him even to ſhew us the actor, while his memory is upon the rack, and his principal attention is employ'd about it?

If the courſe of the waters deſtin'd to furniſh a fountain by their riſe and falls, be ſtop'd in part, by ſome obſtacle thrown into the pipes thro' which they ſhou'd have been diſtributed, the jets and caſcades will be able to perform but a very ſmall part of their effect; and in the ſame manner, if what the actor is to deliver do not occur to him with all that freedom and rapidity that it ought, the fineſt talents in the world will be of very little uſe in the embelliſhing it.

There is in this particular a vaſt advantage in the having been long accuſtom'd to the ſtage, and long practis'd in a part. Indeed without the latter circumſtance in ſome degree aſſiſt the player, it is ſcarce poſſible for him to ſucceed well in this great point, of wholly forgetting himſelf and his own concerns, to give us the heroe he repreſents, unſully'd either with the fears or the awkwardneſs of the player who repreſents him.

We have ſeen the firſt nights of *Macbeth*, and ſome other characters which Mr. *Garrick* has afterwards acted with the higheſt and moſt deſerv'd applauſe, hurt conſiderably by his unacquaintance with

with the perſonage, and uncertain memory of the things to be repeated.

On the contrary, how much does Mr. *Ryan* owe to his long familiarity with the parts he plays, in the applauſe he receives from his manner of executing many of them. An inattention and abſence of mind too frequent with him, hurt his reputation in many characters; but where he throws off this indolence, how much the perſon he repreſents does he appear in many very capital parts. In the *Prince of Wales*, in the firſt part of *Henry the Fourth*, every thing is ſo ready to his memory, and every article of his deportment ſo perfect in his thoughts, that he is no longer Mr. *Ryan*, but the Prince, as ſoon as he enters on the character. With how much true ſpirit, with how great juſtice to the author, does he repeat his vindication and promiſe of ſervices to his father, to whom, when he upbraids him with his degenerate vices, and tells him what he expects from them, he anſwers,

Do not think ſo, you ſhall not find it ſo;
And heaven forgive them that ſo much have ſway'd
Your majeſty's good thoughts away from me.
I will redeem all this on *Piercy*'s head,
And in the cloſing of ſome glorious day,
Be bold to tell you that I am your ſon,
When I will wear a garment all of blood,
And ſtain my favours in a bloody maſk;
Which waſh'd away, ſhall take my ſhame all with it.
And that ſhall be the day whene'er it lights,
That this ſame child of honour and renown,
This gallant *Hotſpur*, this all-prais'd knight,
And your unthought of *Harry* chance to meet.

For every honour ſitting on his helm,
Wou'd they were multitudes, and on my head;
My ſhame's redoubled: For the time will come,
That I ſhall make this *Northern* youth exchange
His glorious deeds for my indignities.
Percy is but my factor, good my lord,
T'engroſs up glorious deeds on my behalf,
And I will call him to ſo ſtrict account,
That he ſhall render every glory up,
Yea even the ſlighteſt reckoning of his time,
Or I will tear the treaſure from his heart.
This in the name of heaven I promiſe here;
The which, if I perform, and do ſurvive,
I do beſeech your majeſty may ſalve
The long grown wounds of my intemperance;
If not, the end of life cancels all bonds,
And I will die a hundred thouſand deaths,
Ere break the ſmalleſt parcel of this vow.

The applauſe the audience always gives this performer on his delivering this ſpeech, is far from being more than he deſerves. We ſee nothing of the player in it: 'Tis nature itſelf. The contrition, the reſolution, the gallantry, and the ſolemnity expreſs'd in it, all ſucceed one another as they wou'd do in real life; and we are ready to believe ourſelves carry'd back to old times, and hearing the firſt ſentiments of that noble daring that afterwards carry'd *Harry the Fifth* thro' the conqueſt of *France*, breathing themſelves out of his own full heart.

To return. The matter the player is to deliver, preſents itſelf much too ſlowly, even when it occurs juſt at the inſtant he is to ſpeak it. His memory ought to take in at one inſtant, not only every thing that he is to ſay at the preſent

ſent moment, but in ſome degree every thing that he will have to repeat in the whole ſcene: By this means, and by none but this, he will be able to regulate his geſtures and deportment, not only ſo as to make them proper for the preſent occaſion, but for the conduct of the whole ſucceeding part of the ſcene.

We may even go a great deal farther, without exceeding the bounds of juſtice in this article. The player ought not only to remember in general his own part in the whole ſcene, nay and in the whole play, but he ſhou'd remember alſo, at leaſt in a general way, the parts of the other actors who are, or at any ſucceeding time are, to be on the ſtage with him. On almoſt all occaſions, the actor, before he begins to ſpeak, ought to prepare his audience for what he is going to deliver, by ſome proper action; and the beginning of this action ought, according to the circumſtances, to precede the ſpeech by a longer or ſhorter time.

The players, eſpecially the young ones, have a way of mechanically recollecting when they are to ſpeak next, by getting off, together with their own parts, what they call the *Cues*, that is, the laſt line of the ſpeech of the perſon next after whom they are to ſpeak. But when the performer knows no more of what is to be ſaid to him than the laſt line, it is hardly to be imagin'd that he can give his ſpeech the proper tone at its ſetting out; and 'tis utterly impoſſible that he ſhou'd introduce it with that kind of action we have juſt now mention'd the neceſſity of.

CHAP. IX.

Containing a Digreſſion concerning certain Articles, which in themſelves are foreign to theatrical Repreſentation; yet without which the Truth of acting is never to be arrived at.

WHEN the players are thoroughly perfect in the remembrance of their parts, and have ſtudy'd ſo careſully their different circumſtances, that they are ready to beſtow on each that ſort of expreſſion which is adapted to it; we find the moſt neceſſary appearances are already all prepared to keep up the illuſion in the repreſentation, and to perſuade us into an opinion of its being a reality. We have nothing now left us then to enquire into, but ſuch things as are independent both of the action and the delivery.

If we wou'd have the repreſentation perfect in its kind, all that now remains, is to join theſe requiſites of the latter kind with thoſe of the firſt.

If theſe connections are in ſome degree neceſſary to us in plays, they are infinitely more ſo in the *Italian* operas. The more every appearance of reality is neglected in the very nature of performances, the more neceſſity there is that the deluſion of our ſenſes ſhou'd take us off from all thoughts of uſing our reaſon. This kind of theatrical entertainment invented by the *Italians*, a nation fonder of ſhew than of reality, and intended to amuſe the eyes and to entertain the ears, rather than to affect the heart, to rouſe

rouſe the paſſions, or in any degree to employ the underſtanding, keeps up to this day the ſpirit of its original nature: Even when there have been people who have underſtood the language, and have inſiſted upon meaning in the words, it has ſtill been left in poſſeſſion of all that gewgaw ſplendour which was intended originally to make ſenſe unneceſſary to it; and ſtage monſters and pompous ſcenery are yet allow'd among the things of greateſt merit in it.

Our imagination is conducted by theſe kind of theatrical repreſentations from prodigy to prodigy; and at every inſtant we are expected to prepare ouſelves for ſeeing ſcenes, each more extraordinary than the laſt. A magnificent palace changes in a moment into a frightful deſart; and in a few minutes more, a ſhepherd's cottage becomes a majeſtick temple.

A conjurer in one ſcene determin'd to plague a couple of unhappy lovers, ranſacks all the elements for means to execute his purpoſe; furies, fiends and diſcord ariſe from the gaping ground, which preſents all hell to our view; and the next ſcene ſhews us *Venus* and *Cupid* attended by the Graces, deſcending from the clouds to crown the conſtancy of the tender pair. We are hurry'd to the utmoſt bounds of imaginary worlds at the ſhifting of a ſcene, and are in one moment in the *Idalian* groves, in the next, in caves and grottos at the bottom of the ſea, the reſort of *Nereids*, and in a third we are ſeated on the top of *Olympus* in the midſt of a council of the gods.

The art of the mechanick and decorator are no leſs eſſential in theſe performances, than the genius of the poet, the ſkill of the compoſer, or

the art of the player, to give ſome ſort of appearance at leaſt of a reality to the repreſentation. Our ridiculous pantomimes are as wild in this way as the ſtrangeſt extravagances of the *Italians* ever were; but excepting theſe, the theatrical pieces repreſented on an *Engliſh* ſtage, as they are conformable to nature and to reaſon, and are deſtin'd to employ the underſtanding, and to affect the heart, may eaſily ſpare a great deal in pomp and decorations. The probability of the incidents in our plays, the judicious conduct of the ſeveral ſcenes, the force and ſpirit of the words, and the juſt play of the actors, often employ the mind ſo abſolutely with us, that the ſenſes have ſcarce liberty to exert themſelves at all; and we are often ſo pleas'd with the matter of a ſcene, that we pay no regard to the decorations of the ſtage on which it is repreſented.

Notwithſtanding that we are in the right to be more indifferent about this article at the play-houſe than at the opera, yet it cannot but be acknowledg'd it wou'd be much more reaſonable that the ſcenery ſhould always repreſent at leaſt the place where the action repreſented is ſaid to be perform'd, than that it ſhould be left at random in this point: And above all things it is abſurd and monſtrous to admit a part of the audience upon the ſtage and behind the ſcenes. This is a piece of folly that had its riſe in *France*, and that has been often attempted to be introduced among us, but always with that ill ſucceſs it deſerves. Tho' the avarice of our managers ſeems very well diſpos'd to ſuffer the ſtage to be fill'd as well as the boxes in this manner, the indignation of the generality of the audience

audience has never fail'd to expreſs itſelf too ſeverely againſt the people who place themſelves there, to encourage them to make a practice of doing ſo.

We readily pardon the abuſes of this kind in the particular inſtance of the benefit nights of favorite players; paying them the compliment of ſacrificing to their intereſt the appearance of reality, which the play might have without this, but which can never be given it under ſuch circumſtances: it might however be wiſh'd, that even on theſe occaſions, ſome care were taken in the diſtribution of theſe people, and ſome decency obſerv'd in the fault: as, that the ſtage were never crowded till every other part of the houſe were full; that even then the people were ſo diſpos'd on it, as to give free paſſage to the performers in their coming on and going off the ſtage, and a ſpace ſufficient left for the repreſentation; ſcarce any one of which particulars is now ever comply'd with.

The dreſſes of the actors is another particular that we are uſually as careleſs about as the ſcenery in our plays. We ſhou'd indeed be offended if we ſaw a perſon who perform'd the part of a man of rank and quality, act in a plain ſuit; but we are very unconcern'd to ſee an actreſs, whoſe part is that of a chambermaid, enter upon the ſtage in a habit that in real life might be worn by a Dutcheſs. We forget the neceſſary plainneſs, that a perſon of the character and ſtation repreſented to us ought to appear in, and only ſay upon the occaſion, that Mrs. *Clive* has a great many very good cloaths. The general taſte which we have for extravagance in dreſs, makes us forget the intereſt

we have in the truth of the repreſentation.

This is another folly which we have imported from *France*, where it is carry'd to ſo much a greater height than with us, that it is as common for a ſtranger at firſt ſight to miſtake the waiting gentlewoman for the ſiſter of the lady ſhe belongs to, as it is for him to hear the gentlemen in the pit call out to thoſe on the ſtage, to entreat they will favour them ſo far as not to ſtand between them and the performers.

We are no more to expect that the generality of players will ever be brought of their own choice to prefer the dreſs under which they may beſt and moſt naturally affect the heart, to that by which they may charm the eyes, and make the audience believe them to be genteel and clever people, than that the maſter of the houſe will of his own motion deny himſelf the crowns that offer at the ſtage door, for the ſake of repreſenting the play the more naturally to us. Let us at leaſt however deſire that the manager will draw his magick circle in each of the openings of the ſcenes, beyond which the perſons admitted behind them may not advance; that they may be kept, in as great a meaſure as may be, out of our ſight; and let us entreat of the players, that they wou'd regulate, as well as they can, their vanity and love of finery, by the nature of the part they are to perform, and not by their native pride make it impoſſible for us to know what character it is they are playing, unleſs we are inform'd of it before hand.

One great ſource of theſe abuſes in the parts of the waiting maids is, that the authors of our farces in general have made perſons of that rank the principal characters of the piece, while

while their miſtreſſes have been little better than cyphers. But we are apt to believe that the authors of thoſe pieces, intended that the ſuperiority of character in the ſervant, ſhou'd be diſcover'd in the courſe of performance, not by the habit; and that the whole wou'd have ſomewhat more the air of nature, if when they are both to appear often together upon the ſtage, the maid were at leaſt not better dreſs'd than the miſtreſs. We are not without inſtances where the footman is made the heroe of a farce, and his maſter a mighty inſignificant perſon in it; yet we have never found the abſurdity carry'd ſo high among the men, as to ſee the *Lying Valet* better dreſs'd than his maſter, tho' there wou'd be a peculiar contradiction in it in this character, that wou'd never have fail'd of ſpiriting up an actreſs to have ſhewed her judgment by doing it. The men, tho' in general much leſs blameable than the women on this occaſion, yet are not without their errors in it, and thoſe ſuch as greatly hurt the air of probability in the repreſentation. We wou'd entreat of them in general to remember that their parts concern them not only in what we ſee of them on the ſtage, but in every thing which we hear paſſes without, in which they are concern'd. We wou'd not deſire things to be carry'd ſo far indeed on this occaſion, as to expect a beau to enter in dirty boots, becauſe he is to mention his having come a journey; but then we wou'd not have an *Oreſtes* return from the temple, where at the inſtigation of *Hermione*, he has been cauſing *Pyrrhus* to be aſſaſſinated, without one curl of his peruke out of order. Let the look of reality be kept up; and when the actor tells us

of ſome dreadful buſtle he has been in, we wou'd have him ſhew ſome marks of it by the diſorder of his perſon.

The firſt time that Mr. *Garrick* play'd *Macbeth*, he took occaſion in one of his ſcenes of greateſt confuſion, to enter upon the ſtage with his coat and waiſtcoat both unbutton'd, and with ſome other diſcompoſures in his dreſs, that added greatly to the reſemblance of nature in that part of his character. He did this however only the firſt night, and loſt, by the omitting it afterwards, all the merit of having done it at all. We are apt to believe that ſome of his friends who aſſume to themſelves the character of criticks on ſtage performances, adviſ'd him to omit this ſtriking particular, in the following repreſentations: we have no objection to that gentleman's uſing the friendſhip of theſe people hereafter, but hope he will not any more follow their advice.

We are very ſenſible of the merit that ſome of our modern players claim to themſelves from their judgment in dreſſing their characters; and we allow it to be a merit of a higher kind on theſe occaſions, than the world in general are willing to think it. But ſome late inſtances on one of the theatres make it neceſſary that we ſhou'd remind the people who are ſo fond of their talents in this way, that the habits of characters on the ſtage ſhou'd be proper as well as pretty; and that the actors are not only to dreſs ſo as not to offend probability, but they are to be ty'd down as much as painters to the general cuſtoms of the world. *Alexander* the great, or *Julius Cæſar*, wou'd appear as mon-

ſtrous to us in bag wigs on the ſtage as in a picture.

In theatrical entertainments wherein ſinging is requir'd, we are obliged to overlook a great many improprieties among the performers for the ſake of the eſſential point. A good voice is a thing that falls to the ſhare but of one man in ten thouſand; and where we find a perſon poſſeſs'd of that, we are to overlook almoſt every thing elſe, when there is muſick in his part. This is the caſe very frequently in our farces, in which we pardon a man's figure being ever ſo improper for the character he repreſents, provided he can give the ſongs of his part in an agreeable manner. On the contrary, when acting only is the buſineſs, we are much more rigid in our judgments. We expect that the perſon and figure of the performer, fix our eyes as ſoon as we ſee him; that he be like in ſhape and every other particular to what we ſuppoſe the perſon he repreſents to have been; and that nature herſelf hath given him the firſt ſtrokes toward his perfection in the character.

We have in a former part of this treatiſe, occaſionally mention'd the general and vague reſemblance, which there ought always to be between the original and the copy of it on the ſtage; but we here enter on the ſubject of a much more particular and more determinate ſimilarity.

We remember very lately, an excellent actreſs Mrs. *Pritchard*, playing the part of *Jane Shore*: She ſpoke it, as ſhe does every thing elſe, at leaſt as well as any body cou'd; but we were ſhock'd in the firſt ſcenes, at the face and figure of this actreſs, under the repreſentation of all

thoſe charms that are ſo laviſhly aſcrib'd by the poet to that unfortunate heroine; and in the concluſion, nothing cou'd be ſo unnatural as to ſee that plump and roſy figure endeavouring to preſent us with a view of the utmoſt want, and ſtarving.

The beſt friends of this actreſs, without remembering the unlucky compariſon of her general deportment, and that of Mrs. *Woffington* in this character, will acknowledge that ſhe was put quite out of her way, in being compell'd to do it; and that even if ſhe cou'd have play'd it better than ſhe did, ſhe wou'd never have been able to have exhibited that image of famine, which the author meant to picture to us in the laſt ſcene, where the wretched creature is repreſented as ſinking to death thro' a long want of food.

If the player wou'd have the repreſentation carry with it an entire air of truth, he muſt be cautious not only to conduct his action and recitation with a ſtrict regard to nature; but he muſt never ſelect a character to appear in, which is remarkable for any particular ſtriking ſingularity which is not in himſelf. He cannot too frequently remember that the repreſentation of a play is a ſort of painting, which owes all its beauty to a cloſe imitation of nature, and that its touches are expected to be even vaſtly more expreſſive than thoſe of the pencil: That the more advantages the ſtage has for the making the illuſion perfect, the more perfection we expect to find in it there; and that it is not enough that the fictions it expoſes to our view, ſeem to bear a reſemblance to the events which they are intended to figure to us, but that we expect that reſemblance to be ſo perfect, that we ſhall be

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able to perſuade ourſelves that what is in reality but a copy, is an original, and that the very events themſelves, and the very perſons concern'd in them, are really and truly preſent before our eyes.

CHAP. X.

In which ſome important Rules are added to the Principles before eſtabliſh'd, of the Truth of Action and Recitation.

THE reflexions and obſervations which are to compoſe this chapter, naturally ariſe from the remarks we have already made of the neceſſity there is of an actor's playing with truth, in order to his playing with applauſe: this neceſſity naturally infers that of underſtanding the ſeveral degrees by which the greater emotions are to be rais'd to their due height, and of being able to ſhade the tranſitions thro' which he is to run from one to another of them.

The dramatic poet, who is a maſter of his art, always very carefully hides from the audience the end to which he is making; and the player ought alſo to regulate his conduct by that of his author, and not to let us perceive what will be the event of the action till we are juſt upon it: we do not deſire to be able to gueſs beforehand what it is that is reſerv'd for our entertainment in the concluſion of the piece; but at the ſame time it is to be obſerv'd, that we would not be miſled and deceived by the performer in regard to it.

We are very well ſatisfy'd with ſeeing incidents occur which we did not expect; but we are never pleas'd at being made to expect that which is not to happen.

In the tragedy of the *Diſtreſs'd Mother* we are judiciouſly kept in ignorance, by the author, of what is to be the cataſtrophe, 'till we arrive at it. We ſee indeed thro' the conduct of the whole play that *Pyrrhus* will not marry *Hermione*; but we do not foreſee, that he will be kill'd in the temple, or that the diſtreſs'd *Andromache* will be made happy. Tho' we have no expectation of this, we are not at all diſpleas'd with ſeeing it happen; but we ſhould have been violently diſpleas'd, if, after all that is hinted to us to the contrary, *Pyrrhus* ſhould have marry'd *Hermione*, and ſacrific'd both the widow and her ſon; the former to the reſentments of her rival, and the other to thoſe of *Greece*.

'Tis true that the author has in this caſe ſo carefully and judiciouſly kept up the character and manners of his heroe, that we ſee plainly enough what will not be the end, tho' we do not ſee what will be ſo: but it is in vain that the poet takes all the care in the world to do this, if the actor does not enter into the ſpirit of it, and keep up his part in it.

Pyrrhus is one of the characters in which Mr. *Quin* has been accus'd of *monotony*, and his enemies have cenſur'd him alſo as wanting vehemence in many of the ſpeeches of it, when he ſays to *Andromache*, who is terrify'd to death at the news of her ſon's life being demanded by the *Greeks*,

Dry up thoſe tears, I muſt not ſee you weep,
And know I have rejected their demands;
The *Greeks* already threaten me with war,
But ſhould they arm, as once they did for *Helen*,
And hide the *Adriatick* with their fleets;

Should

Should they prepare a ſecond ten years ſiege,
And lay my towns and palaces in duſt,
I am determin'd to defend your ſon,
And rather die myſelf than give him up.
But, madam, in the midſt of all theſe dangers,
Will you refuſe me a propitious ſmile?
Hated of *Greece*, and preſs'd on every ſide,
Let me not, madam, while I fight your cauſe,
Let me not combat with your cruelties,
And count *Andromache* amongſt my foes.

And when he afterwards, on the coldneſs of her reply to this, goes on,

Will your reſentment then endure for ever?
Muſt *Pyrrhus* never be forgiven?—'Tis true
My ſword has often reak'd in *Phrygian* blood,
And carry'd havock thro' your royal kindred;
But you, fair princeſs, amply have aveng'd
Old *Priam*'s vanquiſh'd houſe!

It has been objected to him that he robs theſe ſpeeches of half their beauty, by not giving them more fire; but let us conſider that the events of a heroe's actions are only to be judg'd of by his temper. Conſtancy of mind is one of the great characteriſtics of this part, and is that which makes us foreſee that he will not forſake the intereſts of *Andromache*. Should an actor of leſs judgment throw all that violence into theſe ſpeeches that ſuch half judges ſeem to require, he would deſtroy that character which the poet had ſo artfully preſerv'd in every ſentence, and on which the probability of the whole play depends; we ſhould naturally expect that the continued refuſal

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of *Andromache* would throw a man of his violent temper into the arms of *Hermione* in mere revenge, and ſhould blame the author for deviating from probability in keeping up to the conſtancy of his love to the *Trojan* captive.

CHAP. XI.

Of natural Playing.

IT is not impoſſible that the performance of an (actor, tho' it be regularly adjuſted to the greater part of the rules hitherto laid down, nay, tho' it take in the greater part of the conditions which have been mention'd as neceſſary to perfection, and in conſequence of all this, have the principal characters on which the truth both in action and recitation depend,) may yet not be natural.

It will be perhaps demanded, after this aſſertion, whether it be always neceſſary that a theatrical repreſentation be natural? and this is a queſtion which ſtands in need of ſome explanation.

If we are to underſtand by natural playing that only which has not an air of conſtraint and trouble to the player, then every actor in the world, whether his part for the night requires a ſimple and unaffected manner, or whatever other, is under a neceſſity as far as he can to play naturally. But even in this determination we muſt uſe a caution in diſtinguiſhing, and muſt not confound negligent and careleſs with eaſy and unaffected playing; the latter, tho' it does not expreſs any ſtudy or labour to the eye, is yet always the effect of a great deal of both; the former is the effect of an inſolent indolence, and is an affront upon the underſtandings of an audience.

The reaſon why we ſometimes diſcover the ſtudy'd action of the player, is not becauſe he has been at the pains of ſtudying it beforehand, but becauſe he has not ſtudy'd it enough: the laſt touches of his application in this kind, ſhould be thoſe employ'd to conceal that there ever was any labour beſtow'd at all upon what he is doing; and the reſt, without this, always hurts inſtead of pleaſing us.

Among the ſeveral manners of playing with truth and juſtice, that which is moſt of all diveſted of the pomp and ceremony of playing is frequently what has moſt of all been labour'd by the performers: 'tis in this as in poetry, thoſe pieces which ſeem to the reader the eaſieſt and moſt familiar of all, are frequently thoſe which have coſt the author the moſt trouble.

There is not any thing in modern tragedy that has ſo much the air of nature, of eaſe, and unaffected plainneſs in the delivery, as the relation *Pierre* gives to *Jaffier* of the ruin of his affairs, as the juſtly celebrated player above mention'd delivers it; and yet, perhaps there is not any thing in all the parts he ſhines in, that has coſt him ſo much ſtudy: nothing leſs than a repeated conſideration of every ſentence could give him the power to ſpeak as he does,

I paſs'd this very moment by thy doors,
And ſaw them guarded by a troop of villains;
The ſons of public rapine were deſtroying:
They told me, by the ſentence of the law,
They had commiſſion to ſeize all thy fortune;
Nay more, *Priuli*'s cruel hand had ſign'd it.
Here ſtood a ruffian with a horrid face,
Lording it o'er a pile of maſſy plate,

Tumbled

Tumbled into a heap for public ſale;
There was another making villanous jeſts
At thy undoing; he had ta'en poſſeſſion
Of all thy antient moſt domeſtic ornaments,
Rich hangings, intermix'd and wrought with gold;
The very bed which on thy wedding night
Receiv'd thee to the arms of *Belvidera*,
The ſcene of all thy joys, was violated
By the coarſe hands of filthy dungeon villains,
And thrown among the common lumber.

We are ſenſible that Mr. *Garrick* is vaſtly more the player in this famous ſpeech than the actor we are paying our juſt praiſes to in it; but we are alſo ſenſible, that Mr. *Quin* is vaſtly more the man: Mr. *Garrick*'s fire loſes its end; and to a judicious obſerver he will appear to be employing his whole thought upon the bare delivery of the words: Mr. *Quin* ſhews a vaſtly deeper thought in the ſcene, and while we ſee in him the man himſelf, the very friend of *Jaffier*, curbing that ſpirit which ſeems in the other but a ſort of triumph over the misfortunes of the perſon, this actor pities in every look, every accent: we ſee farther, that he means more by this relation than the bare news of it, and expects the purpoſe he afterwards ſhews he intended it to ſerve.

If we allow this in regard to the pronouncing this ſpeech, how much more ſuperiority are we to acknowledge on Mr. *Quin*'s part in the ſucceeding one,

Curſe thy dull ſtars, and the worſt fate of *Venice*,
Where brothers, friends, and fathers, all are falſe;

Where

Where there's no faith, no truth; where innocence
Stoops under vile oppreſſion, and vice lords it.
Hadſt thou but ſeen, as I did, how at laſt
Thy beauteous *Belvidera*, like a wretch
That's doom'd to banishment, came weeping forth,
Shining thro' tears like April ſuns thro' ſhowers,
That labour to o'ercome the cloud that loads them;
While two young virgins, on whoſe arms ſhe lean'd,
Kindly look'd up, and at her grief grew ſad,
As if they catch'd the ſorrows that fell from her!
Ev'n the lewd rabble that were gather'd round
To ſee the ſight, ſtood mute when they beheld her,
Govern'd their roaring throats, and grumbled pity;
I could have hugg'd the greaſy rogues, they pleas'd me.

Here the intent and drift of the revengeful *Pierre* appears more ſtrongly than before, yet all under the cloak of plainneſs and ſimplicity of ſpeaking; we even are ready to grudge him the praiſe he extorts from us, as if we thought he did not take pains enough to deſerve it.

Thoſe parts in our comedies which require in the player an air of artleſſneſs and ſimplicity, are in regard to the others, much what the minuet in dancing is to the high capering of ſome of our modern favourites on the ſtage; the latter throws the body into attitudes which the former will by no means bear, and gives a force and violence to the ſteps which almoſt hurts the ſpectator; but the other

other is not to be acquir'd without at leaſt as much ſtudy and practice; and even the higheſt ſtrokes of the former, when moſt judiciouſly perform'd, ought not to diſcover the labour with which they are executed. Indeed the moſt violent parts in a play never perfectly pleaſe, unleſs where they ſeem to flow from the nature of the circumſtance, not from the conſtraint the performer lays himſelf under to execute them; as the comic dancer never gives us perfect ſatisfaction unleſs when he ſeems as *eaſy* in performing his moſt difficult ſtrokes, as a common performer in that way, is in his minuet ſteps.

If we chuſe to underſtand the term *natural*, when apply'd to playing, in a larger ſenſe, and to expreſs by it an exact imitation of nature, as it appears in common in the world, we ſhall not ſcruple to affirm, that there are many caſes in which a player would appear lifeleſs, ſpiritleſs, and inſipid, by playing naturally.

In the firſt place, there are a great many comic characters in which the actor approaches the nearer to the truth of playing, that is, to the expreſſing exactly what the author means, as he employs more of a certain ſet of extraordinary affectations which are the diſtinguiſhing peculiarities of the character he performs. The part of *Clincher* in the *Trip to the Jubilee*, is evidently of this kind; and a man can never act it well who does not very widely depart from natural playing, in this laſt ſenſe of the word.

We may alſo obſerve, that the actor ſometimes cannot, nay ought not, to give in his playing the full *force* that the nature of the paſſage he delivers may ſeem to require. This is a propoſition that will probably appear odd at firſt ſight to

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ſome of our readers, but perhaps it will have more the appearance of reaſon, after the following obſervations have been attended to.

OBSERVATION I.

We uſe the word *force* very improperly, when we apply it, as is frequently done, to the too great vehemence of the declamation of an actor in tragedy. When a painter, in a piece wherein he means to affect the paſſions, carries the extravagance of his fancy ſo far as to make his figures have an air of grimace, we ſhould expreſs ourſelves very improperly if we ſay he has given great *force* to them; we ſhould deliver our ſenſe of the performance in much more adequate words, if we ſay he has very ill deſign'd what he intended to expreſs. When an actor in tragedy, in order to play his part in a pathetic and affecting manner, takes up the violence of a madman, we ought not to ſay that he plays his part with a great deal of ſtrength and *force*, but that he plays a different part from that which the author laid down for him.

Force in the author is the ſame thing as ſtrong expreſſion in the painter, and the caricature is no more to be univerſal in the buſineſs of the one than of the other; 'tis an exceſs which is ſometimes indeed to be permitted, either to make one'ſelf merry, or to raiſe a laugh in others; but it is not to be exerted in every piece. A painter in a flight of fancy, traces a groteſque figure of a man, and loads it with a hump on the back greater than ever nature burthen'd any body with; we may be very well pleas'd with the extravavance of ſuch a piece as this for once, but we could

could never applaud a painter who in all his pictures exaggerated in the ſame manner: thus we are pleas'd to ſee an actor in comedy carry certain characters up to an immoderate height to make us laugh, tho' we would by no means wiſh to ſee him ſerve every thing elſe in the ſame way.

OBSERVATION. II.

The employing this exaggerating force is therefore to be allow'd to the actor in comedy, but only under certain reſtrictions and regulations.

'Tis only upon certain conditions that a judicious audience will be pleas'd with it: they will require even that it is extravagant, as it were within the bounds of moderation, and that it keep up a kind of regularity even in its utmoſt wildneſs. We are very well ſatisfied that a painter, influenc'd by a joyous frenzy, ſhould give us a figure for inſtance with an exceſſively long noſe; but we expect at the ſame time that this noſe ſhould have the ſhape and figure of other noſes that we are acquainted with, and that it be ſituated in that part of the face which nature aſſigns for this feature: and we are in the ſame manner willing that the comic actor ſhould ſometimes carry his mimickry farther than nature ordinarily allows herſelf to go; but we are not pleas'd if, under the notion of giving us extremely comic figures, he exhibits monſters to us: the painter and the player have both a privilege of enlarging and heightening objects within the limits of diſcretion, but they are not to exaggerate them

them in ſuch a manner that one cannot know them.

The actor in comedy will not only find it neceſſary to curb the luxuriancy of his genius in this heightening of objects, but he will often be oblig'd even to uſe many precautions when he has confin'd himſelf within reaſonable bounds, before he ventures to lay on the charge.

Any thing conſiderable of this kind never ſucceeds but when the player has beforehand preparatorily led his audience up to a pitch of enthuſiaſm, in which they will not be able to judge of things with the ſame ſeverity that they would have done in cool blood.

We have obſerv'd that this *force* in playing is an exaggeration wholly to be diſſipated by a pleaſantry of diſpoſition; it is like thoſe liberties which we allow ourſelves in converſation, where we ſpeak with freedom. A thouſand extravagancies which a man of prudence would never venture to throw out, if he were conſcious that he was heard by ſober and ſedate people, yet paſs off with high applauſe in companies where noiſy mirth and jollity are on foot.

There are ſeveral tones and geſtures uſed in theſe exaggerations by the players, that would appear abſurd and prepoſterous if we examin'd them with a ſtrict reflection, which yet pleaſe us greatly when we ſuffer them to paſs without ſcrutiny.

Beſides theſe two cautions in regard to the player's applying this extraordinary force, there are yet two others that muſt neceſſarily be obſerv'd to give it any pretenſions to ſucceed; theſe are, that it be not too frequently repeated, and that it be never improperly plac'd.

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As this kind of heightening is only to be permitted on certain conditions, ſo there are alſo ſome peculiar circumſtances under which alone it can be properly apply'd: in general, it can never juſtly have place in any of thoſe characters which make what we rightly enough call thoſe of genteel comedy; and above all things, it is unpardonable in thoſe which the author means ſhould intereſt our paſſions in favour of their deſigns: in all the other parts of comedy it may be made agreeable, and it often is neceſſary.

Of all the comedians on the preſent ſtage, the greateſt applauſe is due to Mr. *Woodward* on this account; the heightening he gives to the character of *Trappolin* in the *Duke and no Duke*, has a greater effect than moſt things of this kind. In the part of *Braſs* in the *Confederacy*, he is excellent in a judicious and well-temper'd uſe of it; but the character that ought to make him famous for ever in this reſpect, is *Mercutio* in *Romeo* and *Juliet*.

This is really a comic character, tho' introduc'd in tragedy, and is of the number of thoſe where an exaggeration of this kind is allowable, according to the ſtricteſt rules, becauſe he is not the principal character of the play, nor are we much intereſted about him: we look upon him as a merry fellow who has drop'd into grave company by chance, and therefore he may without abſurdity ſtretch his faculties to entertain us.

To this lucky circumſtance we are to add, that *Shakeſpear* has happily thrown into his part one of the boldeſt, wildeſt, and moſt extravagant flights of fancy that he was ever author of: here are circumſtances under which the player is at full liberty to throw in all the force he can, and under which no man but the actor we are commending

could

could ever throw in enough. With what infinite ſtrength does he run thro' the famous ſpeech,

O, then I ſee Queen *Mab* has been with him;
She is the fairy's midwife; and ſhe comes,
In ſize no bigger than an agat ſtone
On the fore finger of an alderman,
Drawn by a team of little atomies
Athwart mens noſes as they lie aſleep.
Her waggon ſpokes made of long ſpinner's legs;
The cover, of the wings of graſshoppers;
The traces, of the ſmalleſt ſpider's web;
The collars, of the moonſhine's watery beams;
Her whip of cricket's bone, the laſh of film;
Her waggoner a ſmall grey-coated gnat,
Not half ſo big as a round little worm
Prick'd from the lazy finger of a maid.
Her chariot is an empty hazle nut,
Made by the joyner ſquirrel, or old grub,
Time out of mind, the fairies coachmakers.
And in this ſtate ſhe gallops night by night
Thro' lovers brains,——and then they dream of love;
On courtiers knees that dream on court'ſies ſtrait,
O'er doctors fingers who ſtrait dream of fees,
O'er ladies lips who ſtrait of kiſſes dream,
Which oft the angry *Mab* bliſters with plagues,
Becauſe their breaths with ſweet-meats tainted are.
Sometimes ſhe gallops o'er a lawyer's noſe,
And then hedreams of ſmelling out a ſuit:
And ſometimes comes ſhe with a tythe pig's tail,
Tickling the parſon as he lies aſleep,
Then dreams he of another benefice.

It is not more certain that none but *Shakeſpear* could have wrote this ſpeech, than that no man but *Woodward* can ſpeak it.

Does the plot of a comedy require that the valets or chambermaids who have parts in it ſhould put on the airs of people of condition? In this caſe, provided that the actor or actreſs do not carry the exaggeration to ſuch an exceſs that it is abſurd to imagine the people they mean to impoſe upon ſhould not ſee the cheat, the heightening up the whole renders it greatly the more agreeable.

It may be worth enquiring, why it is that we readily allow, and even generally approve, of a comic actor's burleſquing the character he performs, by carrying it extravagantly above its true rank in real life, and yet never ſuffer him, without imputation of a fault, to turn his part into traveſty, by throwing it into ſomething under the proper dignity? It may be anſwer'd, that a man of condition degrades himſelf in ſome degree by putting on the diſguiſe of a perſon of lower rank, and we are by no means willing that the actor make himſelf ſtill lower by appearing to be particularly pleas'd with the change: there is always danger of the character's being ſuſpected of being really the low thing it affects to appear, if the player carries the diſſimulation the leaſt jot farther than is neceſſary to the keeping up the plot: theſe are plauſible reaſons why we are always hurt when we ſee the player in the character of a gentleman uſe his art of exaggeration in deſcending to the level of the meaner rank of mankind; but it is much otherwiſe in the caſe where the heightening is employ'd in adding a greatneſs and conſequence to the character that

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does not naturally belong to it. A perſon of the common rank always gains upon us, by aiming at high things, and expreſſing an emulation to aſpire to the manner of people above him; and, as the utmoſt he is ever able to arrive at can be only a very imperfect copy of what he would imitate, we have the additional pleaſure of ſeeing the abſurdity and vanity of his attempts, while we are laughing at the folly of the people on whom he is impoſing for not ſeeing thro' the cheat.

There are ſome parts in playing of which the heightening of the character is not only agreeable to the audience, but is even abſolutely neceſſary. It would be too tedious to the reader to enumerate characters in which this ſort of exaggeration is expected by every body; we ſhall only obſerve, that we are to count among theſe all thoſe which are copies of originals that are not known, ſuch, for inſtance, as *Criſpin* in the *Atomiſt*, thoſe in which the author has intended to copy ſome real character, but has given himſelf ſo great liberties in the doing it that it is a traveſtie or burleſque upon the original, not a genuine repreſentation of it; and in fine, thoſe in which he has given to a good portrait ſome additional and very ſtrong touches; ſuch is that of the *Miſer*, which no man will ever play tolerably who does not boldly exaggerate upon all that he ever ſaw of reality, in the manner of his performing it.

The judicious player will always ſwell out his voice, and be very free with his geſtures in the principal parts of the characters of the firſt and ſecond ſort that we have mention'd, becauſe they are in themſelves heightenings upon nature; and

he will do the ſame in thoſe of the third kind, becauſe it is his buſineſs to amuſe and confound the ſpectators with noiſe, that they may not be at liberty to examine whether the author has not now and then exceeded the bounds of probability. The tone of voice in which the ſame form of words may be ſpoken, is always capable of giving them very different meanings; and it is in the actor's power to ſave the author many a cenſure upon the ſtage, which he would receive from thoſe who read his play coolly and ſedately in their cloſets.

We have a famous inſtance of this in the character of the *Miſer* juſt mentioned: if the old gentleman is repreſented in cool blood examining the two hands of his ſon's ſervant, and when he has ſearch'd both, demanding to ſee his other hand; if this we obſerve to be done in cool blood, there will appear great juſtice in the cenſure of the critics, who condemn *Moliere* for having copied *Plautus* in ſo abſurd and monſtrous an extravagance: but the actor is to blame if this be the caſe: if he play the part as he ought, and heighten the confuſion of a covetous old fellow, rob'd of his treaſure, up to a madneſs that will not give him leave to know whether a man has two hands or three, we ſhall find no room to make ſuch a criticiſm; but ſhall have an excellent anſwer to thoſe who know ſo little of the ſtage as to blame a writer for what is abſolutely the fault of an actor.

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OBSERVATION III.

The preceeding obſervation may ſerve to convince many people who are very free with their criticiſms, that they often condemn an author merely becauſe they either will not or cannot enter into a true examination of the paſſage that offends them; we are apt to believe that many who eſteem themſelves great judges of playing, miſtake the matter ſo far as to think every exaggeration, every heightening of a part by the performer, a fault; but it is evident from theſe, among a thouſand other familiar inſtances, that it is very often a merit in the player, and not unfrequently is of abſolute neceſſity.

Notwithſtanding all the truth and reaſon however which there is on the ſide of the heightening ſome characters occaſionally as they require it, the world will never be brought to judge candidly of ſome of the modern players who practiſe it. An actor perhaps is famous in the parts of footmen of ſpirit; he gives boldly into the taſte for heightening his characters; but thoſe he employs his talents upon are, unluckily for him, improper ſubjects for exaggeration: we ſee thro' the impropriety, and tho' we are entertained with him while he is upon the ſtage, we condemn him for it afterwards. Another performer has the good fortune that he need only ſhew his face to ſet us a laughing; he exaggerates every thing greatly beyond the former, yet he eſcapes our cenſure; he owes his good luck not to any ſuperior cunning or addreſs in concealing the manner in which he acquires his applauſe, but merely to the parts he acts. He exaggerates and heigh-

tens things much more frequently than the perſon who is condemn'd for doing ſo, but the audience never think of cenſuring him for it, becauſe the characters he plays are a ſort of groteſques, to which a regularity of proportion is not neceſſary or expected.

CHAP. XII.

Of the Fineſſes *in the Art of Playing in general.*

WE have in the whole courſe of this work taken a particular care not to blend under the general name of an *audience* or *ſpectators* thoſe who have abilities to judge, thoſe who have taſte and diſcernment, with the multitude: this however is not a ſufficient diſtinction; the ſpectators of the firſt kind form ſeveral diſtinct claſſes among themſelves, which ought not to be confounded together: with ſome of them our underſtanding judges truly enough of the things that are preſented before it, only it is confin'd within certain bounds and limits: it is peculiar to theſe that they never are able to determine whether what they ſee is all that they ought to ſee upon the occaſion. In others, a ſprightly and fertile imagination accompanies a ſound judgment and a clear diſcernment; theſe are the hardeſt of all to pleaſe; they are not contented with finding every thing good that is preſented before them, but they complain if they have not every thing that they think they had a right to expect.

When an actor performs without blunders, when he throws all the truth and propriety that the nature of his part requires, both into his

action

action and recitation, and when he does not ſhew any thing of labour in his expreſſion, or of ſtudy'd motion in his deportment, the ſpectators of the firſt of theſe two claſſes never think of requiring any thing more of him, as they have no ideas of any merit beyond this: but it is much otherwiſe with the judges of the latter ſort; they know that beſide all this, a great many more beauties may be thrown in, if the actor be capable of them: before the tribunal of theſe judges there is underſtood to be the ſame difference between that kind of playing which has no farther merit than that of being natural and juſt, and that which, beſide theſe qualities, has that of being ingenious and delicate; that there is between a treatiſe written by a man who has knowledge and good ſenſe, with no other qualification for a writer, and that of one who has, added to theſe, a *genius*.

Theſe nice judges not only expect that a comedian ſhould be a faithful copier of things; to claim a merit with them he muſt be able even to create; he muſt know how to contrive and form, as well as expreſs things; and, indeed, in this conſiſts all the delicateſſe and ſuperior merit of the profeſſion.

Whatever wit, whatever judgment an author may have, and however careful he may be to bring his piece to perfection, it never happens that every thing occurs to him that might be proper on the ſubject, he therefore ſcarce ever fails of omitting many things that might have given great beauty to the piece. When the performance is in verſe the matter is ſtill worſe, he is cramp'd from time to time by the meaſure, and finds an impoſſibility of throwing in a thou-

ſand graces that occur to him, becauſe of the neceſſary regard to his numbers: in this caſe the omiſſion of a ſingle word, which he finds it impoſſible to get a place for in the line, frequently obſcures a ſentence, and a fine idea is by this means loſt, at leaſt to two thirds of an audience, unleſs the actor employs all his talents to diſcover it.

The player, in theſe caſes, may artfully throw in a monoſyllable, where he finds the author would have done it, but could not; and may ſo modulate the reſt of the line, that the meaſure is not perceived, as he ſpeaks, to be hurt by it, and yet the ſentiment is convey'd in its full force to every body: but 'tis only in pieces in verſe that the player has opportunity of doing the poet this ſingular ſervice; in proſe 'tis the author's own fault if he wants it. This is one of the ſuperior kinds of merit of the tragic player, and indeed is one of the principal reaſons why the beſt and moſt judicious perſons of a company ſhould have the tragedy parts aſſign'd them, as they give them opportunities of ſhewing an audience their judgment and underſtanding.

The actors of a lower claſs have no idea that they are to ſee with any other eyes than thoſe of the author, they never imagine that there is a poſſibility of adding any thing to what he has ſaid; but thoſe of a ſuperior claſs ſhould always examine their parts with a diſcerning eye, and ſeize upon every remark, every circumſtance that had eſcap'd the author, but would have done him credit if it had occur'd to him, as occaſions of merit toward the audience in themſelves; whatever iswanting in the dialogue is expected to be added by their play.

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The author whoſe piece is to have the principal characters play'd by perſons of this claſs may always venture to omit things, or to expreſs himſelf but imperfectly, where there may appear ſufficient reaſons for his doing ſo, ſince he will be ſure to have a ſupplement or a commentary as far as the nature of the paſſage will bear it in the performing. The great thing in which theſe players diſtinguiſh themſelves, is the expreſſing to the audience ſuch ſentiments as are not deliver'd in the play, yet are not only agreeable to, but neceſſary to be underſtood of the character they repreſent, under that ſituation in which it is when they do it. Whoever has ſeen Mr. *Garrick* play *Iago*, or *Macklin* the *Jew* of *Venice*, and has before or after read the plays in which thoſe characters make ſo great a figure, if he be qualified for judging nicely of theatrical repreſentations, will find that there are many inſtances of this kind of merit in both thoſe repreſentations, which the audience ought, and which the author, if he were alive, would greatly thank the performers for.

In the ſame manner as the actor may often ſhew his judgment in ſaying more than the author has put into his part, he may do it not leſs in many inſtances in omitting things that are thrown into it; this however requires the judgment of a very maſterly performer to do with a neceſſary propriety.

It is recorded of Mr. *Mills*, that he long valued himſelf among his friends for ſpeaking a ſoliloquy in one of our comedies, which, as he expreſs'd it, poor Mr. *Wilks* never could remember when he acted that part; but he was at length thoroughly mortify'd by being told by a very great

judge of dramatic writing, that there was more merit in Mr. *Wilks*'s forgetting that ſpeech than in all that ever *he* had remembered in his life.

Some actors, tho' very capable of entering into the delicacy of all that attention and regard which people of high rank, tho' equal in that point, owe to one another, yet are not able to judge of that which each character owes to itſelf. The actreſſes of the preſent age are apt to want this, and it very frequently falls in our way to lament that they do ſo.

Familiarity is apt to take off from pomp, and is therefore frequently with ſome juſtice condemn'd in tragic playing; but it is not always that the audience have grounds for their cenſures on this occaſion: within theſe few years tragedy has very juſtly drop'd ſo much of its falſe majeſty with us, that we now find many a performer has been condemn'd for that familiarity for which he deſerv'd the utmoſt praiſes. It is not many years ſince Mr. *Foot* attempted the character of *Othello*; he play'd it with applauſe, and tho' not without faults, yet perhaps with more beauties than have been ſeen in it ſince; he ow'd much of the peculiar manner in which he ſpoke many of the more pathetic ſpeeches in this character to the inſtructions of Mr. *Macklin*, who was then labouring at a ſcheme which our greateſt players have ſince very judiciouſly given into, tho' they have not very gratefully acknowledg'd to whom they ow'd it; we mean, that of bringing playing nearer to nature than it us'd to be.

Some of the critics, as they eſteem themſelves, who were preſent at the firſt night of Mr. *Foot*'s appearance in the character we have juſt men-

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tion'd, complain'd that tho' he was at leaſt pompous enough in the main, yet in ſome particular parts he fell from the dignity of tragedy, and gave into too plain a manner of ſpeaking: the inſtance is too much in every body's memory to render it neceſſary for us to quote the particular paſſages for which he was cenſur'd in this manner; it is ſufficient that we ſay in his vindication, that the audience, or rather this part of the audience, very often condemn'd in him thoſe tones and geſtures as too much approaching to familiarity, which had no ſmall ſhare in the making his performance more natural and affecting than that of any man who had ever before been ſeen in the ſame character.

Is a tone or a geſture juſt? are they expreſſive? and do they not degrade the perſon who uſes them, nor the perſon to whom they are addreſs'd? let the actor fall boldly then into the uſe of them, and never fear degrading the majeſty of tragedy by it; 'tis only that falſe majeſty which we want to be rid of, not the genuine and native dignity of it, that can be hurt by it. The accompliſh'd player does not confine the fineſſes of his art to the narrow bounds of adding ornaments only to the parts he repreſents; he is for extending them to the hiding the blemiſhes that may be in them.

This is indeed the higheſt merit the addreſs of an actor can arrive at; but this is not eaſy, nor indeed always poſſible: Among the faults that a judicious eye diſcovers even in our beſt dramatick pieces, there are ſome which no art can palliate in the repreſentation. Of this kind are obſolete phraſes, or ſuch as the cuſtom of the world has now render'd contemptible, tho' in repute at the

time when the author introduc'd them into his work. The player can never palliate or amend ſuch paſſages; and therefore he ought boldly to leave them out; they are decay'd branches which ſhou'd be cut off from the yet healthful tree; and the performer may be aſſur'd, that the judicious part of his audience wou'd rather hear ſome of the verſes ſhorten'd, nay, wou'd be rather content to have many of them wholly left out, than to ſee an author whom they reverence, and whoſe only crime is the having written ſome time ago, expos'd by them to the ſenſeleſs raillery of a ſet of half-witted people about them.

The playhouſes ſwarm with theſe mighty ariſtarchs, who, incapable of preſerving their attention thro' a whole ſcene, or of intereſting themſelves in the buſineſs of a play, are eaſily taken by accidental ſtrokes, and turn'd out of their way by things of ever ſo little importance. *Shakeſpear* himſelf does not eſcape theſe criticks, who in the courſe of a ſcene as full of true majeſty, and as intereſting to the ſoul of every man who is capable of being mov'd, as the world ever produc'd, will loſe ſight of all the beauties it abounds with, in order to fix their attention upon ſome trifling imperfection; which, tho' they have not penetration enough to ſee it, is only ſuch becauſe the times and cuſtoms have chang'd ſince the author wrote it.

Corneille amongſt the *French*, notwithſtanding all his merit, ſhares the ſame fate in this reſpect, that *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*, and the reſt who have written about their time, do with us. A play of that author's is never acted, but people who have not ſenſe enough to reliſh his beauties, are

are merry with what they call his defects; and the actors are afraid to perform ſome of the beſt pieces in their language, which perhaps is the caſe with us, as well as with them, merely becauſe there are ſome paſſages in them that will not bear the teſt of the preſent times, tho' they had even great merit when they were written.

If our players had courage enough to make the neceſſary alterations in their ſeveral parts that the changes of the cuſtoms of an age or two require, how many excellent plays might we ſee reviv'd that now lie dormant; while we in vain complain of wanting variety in our theatres, or what is worſe, ſupply that want with new things too contemptible for cenſure.

What ſhou'd prevent a man of Mr. *Garrick*'s judgment both as a player and a manager from reviving ſome play in which he finds much merit, tho' many imperfections, with all that merit preſerv'd, and all thoſe blemiſhes ſtruck out; inſtead of forcing upon us pieces which he knows he muſt deſpiſe us for being ſatisfy'd with. If a line is bad in an old play, let it be ſtruck out; if a dozen lines are bad in the midſt of a good ſpeech, let them all be ſtruck out, and let the good part of it be preſerv'd. If there are ſcenes which his diſcernment knows wou'd pleaſe, but which are made languid and tireſome by ſome long and lifeleſs ſpeeches, let theſe be retrench'd, or their whole neceſſary import be thrown into a few words, and the reſt of the ſcene preſerv'd. If he ſhou'd find the taſk of preparing a play for the ſtage in this manner too great for his abilities, or, to give it a ſofter turn, that it wou'd take up too much of his time, let him employ in it ſome man of genius

and

and modeſty, (for he knows there are, to the ſcandal of the age, enough of theſe to be found who wou'd be glad of employment) and engage him to perfect and poliſh up the play throughout; to amend thoſe paſſages where the ſenſe is ſo expreſs'd as not to ſound well at preſent, tho' it be neceſſary that it be preſerv'd; to cancel ſuch parts as are leaſt eſſential and moſt blameable; and to ſhorten all the long ſpeeches, ſince we are not quite ſo fond of them as our fathers were, by making the perſon they are addreſs'd to interrupt them in proper places, if but by a ſingle line.

Cou'd the manager we have mentioned be prewith to do this, we ſhou'd have a ſucceſſion of plays which wou'd be new to us, tho' they have been the admiration of our grandfathers, and which wou'd prevent the complaint of our wanting variety, till another poet ſhou'd appear capable of writing what is worth our hearing.

It were much to be wiſh'd that we had ſome changes made even in many of the tragedies, as well as comedies, that go off at preſent without any open cenſure, tho' there are paſſages in them that always hurt the ear of the judicious part of an audience: theſe an actor who had as much merit as ſome of thoſe that play in them, and as much boldneſs as ſo much merit might warrant, wou'd generally be able to palliate to us in the repreſentation: A fault in expreſſion muſt be indeed a very groſs one, when a good actor cannot hide it, if he dares employ his utmoſt art in the doing it.

It frequently happens, tho' not greatly to the credit of the author, that two perſons are employ'd in making long ſpeeches to one another, while

while one or more, who are on the ſtage at the ſame time, but have no buſineſs with what is doing, are at a loſs to know what to do with themſelves. It is true indeed that the attention of the audience is principally taken up with the perſons who are ſpeaking; but it is not to be ſuppos'd, but that they will take ſome notice of the others occaſionally. Perhaps there is not a more difficult circumſtance in playing, than this of ſtanding a long time before an audience with nothing to do. The player is to be very cautious on theſe occaſions, that he does not fall into the error of ſome of the modern actreſſes, who ſhew us on every occaſion that their ſenſe of the thing is, that when they have repeated their own part of the dialogue, they have no buſineſs with what is going on in the ſcene; and that while any body elſe is ſpeaking, they have nothing to do but to caſt their eye over the audience to ſee who admires them moſt, or to adjuſt a ruffle or a tucker. The man who is a maſter of the art of playing will never be idle while he is on the ſtage. He will employ himſelf on the buſineſs of the ſcene without the author's inſtructions, and will find the way of expreſſing himſelf to the purpoſe by dumb-ſhew, where the author has improperly condemn'd him to ſilence.

On the other hand does it happen that the poet has ſo conducted the ſcene, that the ſpeeches made to a performer are not too long, but his own are ſo; he will ſhew his judgment greatly in the taking off the tediouſneſs of a tireſome ſpeech, by the rapidity with which he delivers the leſs expreſſive part of it, and by the air of conſequence which he gives to ſuch paſſages, as

whether

whether they in reality deſerve all the ſound he beſtows upon them or not, at leaſt will bear it better than the reſt. This laſt article is one of thoſe on which the actor ought to employ his utmoſt attention. It is an artifice by which ſome players of the preſent age have ſucceeded to the admiration of an audience, tho' nobody cou'd gueſs by what means, in paſſages which had, from the mouths of the very beſt actors who preceded them, always been us'd to diſpleaſe.

Among the players poſſeſs'd of this happy ſecret, we ought perhaps to place Mr. *Barry* as the very firſt. And it is evidently to this, when we examine it cloſely, that he owes the applauſe he meets with in the part of *Caſtalio*, which had always been uſed to appear, till his time, not the firſt, but the ſecond, ſometimes the third character in the play.

The poet, tho' he has thrown innumerable beauties into this part, has yet made many of the ſpeeches too long, and in moſt of them ſome of the lines are vaſtly inferior to the reſt. They had all nevertheleſs been us'd to be deliver'd in the ſame tone of voice, and with much the ſame degree of energy, till this great genius undertook them: It is no wonder an audience grew tir'd under long declamations, many parts of which were at leaſt of ſo little importance to the ſubject, that they cou'd not intereſt them in the recital; but this excellent player, no ſooner had caſt his eye upon the part, than he plan'd out the method of acquiring reputation in a character which every body elſe of late had fail'd in, and that as they imagin'd not by their own fault, but by that of the author. He happily added a tenderneſs to the part that we never ſaw in it before:

before; and he contriv'd always to paſs over the leſs affecting parts of the longer ſpeeches, and to dwell upon the reſt in ſuch a manner as to make it intereſt us more than even the character of the favourite *Chamont*.

An actor of this judgment, provided the lines are not ſuch that it is impoſſible to give force or ſtrength to any of them, will find the way to paſs lightly over the leſs affecting, to dwell upon thoſe which are a little ſuperior to the reſt, and add a dignity and ſtrength to them, which the author, if he heard him, wou'd own he ought to have given better grounds for.

Every thing grows almoſt what it ought to have been originally, in the mouth of ſuch a ſpeaker: a falſe ſentiment acquires a ſort of juſtice as he pronounces it; and even an unnatural thought is ſome way or other forc'd within the bounds of nature.

We may venture, in ſome ſenſe, to give the name of magick to the performance of ſuch a player; and when the reader conſiders that it is able to draw from us thoſe tears for fancy'd evils, which we ſhou'd ſcarce have ſhed for real ones; to throw us into ſorrow and diſtreſs upon the turns of what we know to be only pompous chimeras, and that more ſincerely and feelingly than many of us wou'd be affected by them for the ſame misfortunes, if they happen'd in real life to our neareſt friends; he will not perhaps cenſure us for having given it too lofty an appellation; or if he is inclin'd to do ſo, let him at leaſt ſuſpend his judgment till he has caſt his eye over the new picture we ſhall draw of it in the ſucceeding chapter.

Hitherto

Hitherto we have only conſider'd the fineſſes in the art of the player, with regard to what conſtitutes their eſſence. We ſhall now proceed to conſider them in another light, in regard to what concerns their different uſe and application. The fineſſes in acting are of various kinds. Some of them are wholly appropriated to tragedy, and others wholly to comedy.

CHAP. XIII.

Of the Fineſſes in playing, which peculiarly belong to Tragedy.

WE determine with great juſtice and reaſon, that the buſineſs of tragedy is to affect us, and raiſe the nobleſt and greateſt emotions in our hearts. It is too natural for the generality of the world to conclude from this, that the performers in this ſpecies of the drama, ought continually to give themſelves up to the moſt powerful emotions of this kind. The generality of an audience really think ſo; and applauſe is given accordingly: But they who think ſo are in the wrong; and the approbation is ill apply'd.

It is often the true buſineſs of the actor, on an occaſion in which it ſhall ſeem to the generality of the people who are preſent, that he ought to ſhew the moſt violent agitations, to expreſs the utmoſt tranquility. This is never done properly, but it draws the higheſt applauſe from the beſt judges. Indeed the greateſt fineſſes of playing are included in the art of knowing when to do this, and how to apply it as a contraſte to the utmoſt advantage.

As

As tragedy propoſes only to ſhew us nature on its moſt intereſting and affecting ſide, the firſt thing the actor who propoſes to excell in playing it has to conſult, is how to give to every character he may be ordered to repreſent, the utmoſt air of dignity that it will bear.

A heroe never appears ſo great, ſo truly ſuch, as when the moſt powerful temptations, the moſt affecting misfortunes, the ſevereſt injuries, the moſt exalted projects, or the moſt imminent dangers are not able to ſhake or diſcompoſe his ſoul. And the more the performer, without doing violence to the ſenſe of this author, can repreſent this ſteadineſs in the character he acts, the more proof he gives us of his own ſkill in his profeſſion.

In the famous tragedy of the *Horatii* and *Curiatii*, which has drawn tears from the eyes of people of almoſt all nations, and which we have juſt now ſeen repreſented in a new light on one of our own theatres, there is room for a peculiar dignity of this kind. The *Horatii* are three heroes, on whom *Rome* is not afraid to venture her fate; the oppoſite nation does the ſame honour to the *Curiatii*, three warriors unhappily united to the others by the neareſt bonds of affinity. The other poets who have hitherto treated the ſubject, have all given the youngeſt of the *Horatii*, and the laſt of the *Curiatii* the ſame ambition, the ſame thirſt of glory, and the ſame love to their country; but *Corneille* has taken care to vary their characters, by deſcribing the latter as combating with vaſtly greater difficulties than the other, in having the ſentiments

of

of love and friendſhip, both oppoſite to his ambition, to conquer.

There is not perhaps in all the dramatick writings in the world, an inſtance where there is a conflict ſo great to be expreſſed between ſuch powerful, and at the ſame time ſuch laudable paſſions; but it has generally been the fate of theſe characters to be greatly miſrepreſented; the players, not entering into the ſpirit of the poet, have always much debaſed the generous magnanimity of *Publius Horatius:* they change what the author means to expreſs as the nobleſt courage, into a brutal fierceneſs, and give in place of the heroe a monſter, a ſavage, who has nothing human but in his voice and figure, and ſometimes ſcarce either of thoſe. The author never meant to expreſs this young warrior rejoycing and triumphing over the man, whom his ſword had laid breathleſs at his feet; but as a man of the moſt ſublime and elevated ſoul, not thirſting after blood and victory, but ſacrificing to his country the deareſt of his friends.

Let any unprejudic'd perſon judge, whether noiſe and vehemence are ſuited to the character of this noble youth. Certainly the fineſſe laſt mentioned is here the true way to deſerve applauſe; and the character never was ſo well repreſented, as when the heroe was deſcribed to us by Mr. *Barry*, as moſt ſedate and tranquil in the midſt of his preparation, his danger, and his victory.

We cannot doubt, notwithſtanding all that is whiſper'd about againſt the new play on this ſubject, but that the character of this heroe is drawn with as much juſtice in it as by *Corneille*; and we flatter ourſelves, that the reader will not blame us for giving a hint to whoever of our preſent

actor

actors ſhall have the fortune to play any ſucceeding part like it, by which they may be warn'd againſt the error of all that have attempted ſuch before this great player.

What we ſhou'd admire in a heroe in real life, there is no doubt but we ſhall alſo admire in the repreſentation of his character on the ſtage: this is not the pompous and the bluſtering air he may give himſelf on all occaſions; a ſettled tranquillity of mind under circumſtances that wou'd raiſe the utmoſt violence in a common man, is often the greateſt mark that can be given of it. All the favours that *Auguſtus* had heap'd upon *Cinna*, were not able to prevent that conſpirator from determining the murther of his benefactor. The deſigns of the conſpirator are diſcovered, and *Auguſtus* commands him to be brought before him, that he may tell him he knows his perfidy. The generality of an audience might expect the emperor to rage and ſtorm with vehemence againſt ſuch unheard of crimes; and if an actor who was to repreſent him in ſuch a ſcene were to rant it with his utmoſt vehemence, we are afraid he wou'd be anſwer'd with as loud and as abſurd an applauſe. What man of judgment does not ſee that the monarch will appear the greater, the leſs way he gives to his paſſion on this occaſion; and that the more provoking the circumſtances are, by the ingratitude of a wretch whom he had loaded with favours, and who yet was plotting all the while he was receiving them to rob him of his throne and life, the more we ſhou'd be affected to ſee in him the majeſty of a ſovereign, and tranquility of a judge, inſtead of the triumph of a man, who was inſulting over an enemy in his power.

The

The leſs a man appears alſo to be ſtruck with the greatneſs of the ſchemes he has projected, the higher idea he will always give us of the ſupport he has for them. *Mithridates* muſt affect every man of ſenſe, by communicating to his ſons the plan of operations he had laid for humbling the pride of *Rome*, greatly more by delivering his ſchemes with an air of eaſe and calmneſs, than if he were to recite them with noiſe and emphaſis, and in the character of a man who wanted to be admir'd for his genius and courage.

We cannot have a ſtronger inſtance of this truth, than in the different manner of the two greateſt players of the age, Mr. *Garrick* and Mr. *Quin*, in the already often quoted part of *Pierre*.

'Tis the buſineſs of this heroe to communicate to his friend the plot he had engag'd in to bring about a revolution in the ſtate of *Venice*. The manner in which theſe two players deliver this account is extremely different; the one does it with fire and ſpirit, the other with weight, but without any ſign of pride in the being engag'd in it. When we hear Mr. *Garrick* tell *Jaffier* of the execution and conſequences of the deed,

Thou ſhalt be freed from baſe Priuli's tyranny,
And thy ſequeſter'd fortunes heal'd again.
I ſhall be free from thoſe opprobrious wrongs
That preſs me now, and bend my ſpirit downward.
All *Venice* free, and every growing merit
Succeed to its juſt right: Fools ſhall be pull'd
From wiſdom's ſeat, thoſe baneful unclean birds,
Thoſe lazy owls who perch'd near fortune's top,
Sit only watchful with their heavy wings

To

To cuff down new fledg'd virtues that wou'd riſe
To nobler heights, and make the grove harmonious.

we allow, from his manner of ſpeaking it, that he plays the part of a bold daring man, and one who is proud of being ſo; but the greatneſs of the character is kept up at an infinitely higher rate by the compoſure with which Mr. *Quin* delivers that ſpeech, and thoſe which precede it. When we hear him tell *Jaffier*

I'll truſt thee with a ſecret. There are ſpirits
This hour at work. But as thou art a man
Whom I have pick'd and choſen from the world,
Swear that thou wilt be true to what I utter,
And when I've told thee, that which only gods
And men like gods are privy to, then ſwear
No chance, no change ſhall wreſt it from thy boſom.
Nay, it is a cauſe thou wilt be fond of, *Jaffier*;
For it is founded on the nobleſt baſis,
Our liberties, our natural inheritance.
There's no religion, no hypocriſy in it;
We'll do the buſineſs, and ne'er faſt and pray for't:
Openly act a deed the world may gaze
With wonder at, and envy when 'tis done.

we eaſily ſee the diſtinction between the manner of playing, which makes *Pierre* fond of the thought of the praiſe he ſhall deſerve by this, and that which ſets him above the reach of it.

Every one will allow that the perſon who makes too much noiſe about the approach of danger, gives room to ſuſpect that he is not well prepar'd againſt it, and that our diſdain of death

death appears moſt eminent when we are able to meet it with the greateſt tranquility.

We owe too much reſpect to the players, for whoſe ſake we have given theſe hints, to expoſe their errors in paſſages, where they have fail'd in the common way: to have applauſe at preſent is not always a proof that one deſerves it; and perhaps theſe parallel inſtances may give occaſion to our ſeeing two of the greateſt characters on the ſtage play'd infinitely more to the ſatisfaction of every body that is worth pleaſing, by thoſe whom we are ſure, if the alternative be offer'd them, wou'd chuſe to deſerve applauſe rather than to have it.

In conſequence of theſe obſervations, we flatter ourſelves that we ſhall be allow'd what has been advanced in the former parts of this treatiſe, that an elevation of ſentiments is a neceſſary condition to the playing tragedy well; and that no one will ever act a great man with ſucceſs, who has not himſelf a great ſoul. An actor who has not an elevated mind will be ſo far from having the power to uſe the contraſts we have been recommending, that he will never be able to conceive or underſtand them. How ſhou'd he, who does not know from his own heart in what manner a heroe wou'd behave in ſuch circumſtances, know how to repreſent him as he ought to be pictured? How will he ever be able to make thoſe nice diſtinctions, that the whole juſtice of a character often depends upon, and which the author in vain makes in the ſentiment, if the actor does not expreſs them in his deportment? And, in conſequence, how will he ever pleaſe thoſe who are able to judge?

The judicious performer will find that the avoiding the pomp of what we generally call tragedy-ſpeaking, is not only neceſſary on theſe and a thouſand other occaſions, to give an air of true greatneſs and dignity to a character; but that there are a great many other inſtances in which it is of excellent uſe, and will procure him the applauſe of all who have taſte. Poets are far from being infallible, or incapable of error. Our beſt tragedies abound with redundant ornaments, which offend the ear of every one who underſtands the true ſpirit of dramatick writing. Theſe however may be vaſtly ſhaded by the actor, and the paſſages moſt blameable render'd at leaſt paſſable, only by this ſimplicity in the manner of delivering them. When a profuſion of figures are thrown into the mouth of a character, where nature wou'd have dictated nothing but what was ſimple and affecting, the more pompouſly ſuch falſe beauties are deliver'd, the more they ſhock the underſtanding; and thoſe very paſſages which one ſees all the judicious faces in the pit frowning upon as they are ſpoken in many of our favourite plays, if delivered more unaffectedly, and the more glaring foibles ſunk in the ſpeaking, wou'd aſſuredly paſs without offence; tho' they cou'd never be made to deſerve applauſe.

Tho' there are many occaſions in which this plain manner of ſpeaking has great charms, yet it is to be acknowledg'd that there are many others, in which all the pomp and dignity which the actor is able to beſtow upon the words in the delivery of them, is ſcarce ſufficient. Sometimes by means of mere vehemence, ſometimes by means of what we more properly expreſs by

the word *dignity* (for there is a wide difference between theſe, tho' the galleries do not always find it out,) the artful player hides the defects of the poet, and gives a ſeeming meaning to what has really in itſelf ſcarce any.

The player who is able to examine ſtrictly and critically the dialogue in that part of a tragedy, in which the character he is to repreſent is concern'd; to avoid in his recitation every thing that is faulty in the author, or that is only likely to ſeem ſo to the audience; to hide real blemiſhes, and to palliate exceptionable paſſages; and, in fine, to give a new luſtre to the beauties in his part, by a well apply'd energy or by a judicious eaſe and ſimplicity; will always obtain the valuable character of a player, who underſtands the fineſſe of tragedy. This is the higheſt applauſe his art can beſtow, and which he will have fewer rivals in, than in moſt other excellencies that fall in his way: But the acquiring ſuch a reputation is not all that he has to take care of, there muſt be a conſtant fund of merit to ſuſtain it, and in ſome ſcenes of diſſimulation the greateſt delicacy of turn can hardly preſerve it.

There are but very few men or women upon the preſent ſtage who have the happy talent of uniting, as is neceſſary to the fineſſe of tragedy, all the majeſty of the king, or heroine, to all the addreſs and artifice of the player.

We have had occaſion, in the courſe of this work, ſometimes to mention the very juſtly celebrated Mr. *Garrick* as inferior to the heroe of another ſtage; but we muſt do him the juſtice to obſerve, that when he is upon his guard, no man ever made this difficult combination with ſo much ſucceſs. There are many parts of *King Richard*,

Richard, in which he excells all the players who ever appeared in that favourite and difficult character, in this nice particular; and in *Macbeth* there is not a ſcene toward the latter end of the play, in which he does not give us inſtances of it, that pleaſe and charm every body who is able to take in this uncommon as well as eminent beauty.

There are indeed few of our performers, who even have the fineſſe neceſſary to preſerve the diſtinction between what is properly *tragedy*, and what, tho' call'd by the ſame name, often deſerves no other appellation than that of *heroic comedy*.

Perhaps it wou'd be a judicious ſcheme to adapt a peculiar middle manner between theſe two, and in that always to play the characters of the *modern Heroes* in tragedy. We are not to ſuppoſe the ſame dignity and elevation of ſtyle neceſſary for a *Torriſmond*, that is for a *Brutus*; nor wou'd we have an *Altamont* deliver himſelf with the pomp of a *Cato*. Lord *Townley* may be deliberate in his ſpeech, and give a great deal of force and energy to ſome paſſages, but he has no buſineſs to imitate *Bajazet* or even *Tamerlane* in his delivery.

There is no fault but has alſo its contrary in the oppoſite extreme. As we have ſome players who pronounce what they have to ſay in the ſame tone and accent, whether it be a *Manly* or an *Alexander* who ſpeaks; ſo we have ſome others who are ſo fond of connecting the ideas of antiquity and heroiſm together, that put them out of a *Greek* or *Roman* habit, and they think they have loſt the privilege of ſpeaking with dignity.

We have very few players who ſeem at all to comprehend that greatneſs has as many peculiar manners of expreſſion, as tenderneſs, or any other of the grand characters of tragedy. That among ſome nations it has always a rigid and ſevere air; among others a great deal of lenity and ſweetneſs; and that it ſometimes has as much diſtance between what it is in one man merely in regard to his manner and temper, and another under the ſame circumſtances, as there is between the times in which they liv'd.

No body will queſtion but that there is true greatneſs both in the character of *Caled*, and in that of *Eumenes*, in the ſiege of *Damaſcus*. Yet the real difference between Turkiſh and Chriſtian greatneſs is ſo very great, that the actor wou'd play a very contemptible part, who ſhou'd in one of them attempt to imitate that ſort of dignity which he ſaw ſucceed in the other.

The ſtage would be greatly more eſteemed than it is at preſent, if the generality of our players wou'd apply themſelves in earneſt to ſtudy, not only theſe eſſential differences, but thoſe alſo which diſtinguiſh the ſame paſſions in people of different countries and of different ages. It is remark'd that on the *French* ſtage, the heroe, be he *Greek*, *Roman* or *Egyptian*, is quite the *Frenchman* in his air and deportment. It is but juſtice to acknowledge that in Mr. *Quin*, *Zanga* is a *Moor*, *Bajazet* a *Turk*, and *Brutus* a *Roman*; but we are afraid that even the beſt of our actors, after this conſummate player, will be cenſur'd for turning heroes of the moſt diſtant parts of the earth into very *Engliſhmen*. The miſchief has been attempted to be remedied in *France*, but in vain: An audience of *Frenchmen*, fond of the

the cuſtoms of their own country, cou'd not bring themſelves to approve the manners of another, even the proper ones of the characters repreſented; but perſeverance probably wou'd have brought them over: 'Tis hard to break through old cuſtoms, but not impoſſible: we have a proof, in the new manner of playing in tragedy, which has ſo happily taken place among us, of the unnaturally pompous one ſo highly applauded by our fathers, that what from its novelty may appear very ſhocking to the common ear at firſt, will, provided it have juſtice on its ſide, ſoon make its way by perſeverance.

CHAP. XIV.

Of the Fineſſes in playing, peculiar to Comedy.

THE performer in tragedy ought always to preſent himſelf before us in the moſt advantageous manner, and under the moſt graceful figure he can. But this is far from being the caſe in every part in comedy; he is there very frequently to exhibit himſelf in the leaſt pleaſing light, and 'tis often his chief buſineſs to make himſelf as fooliſh, as extravagant, and as abſurd as he can.

We have already obſerved that the generality of thoſe, who at preſent ſet up for criticks in dramatick writings, make a very great difference between *genteel Comedy*, and what they improperly have debaſed by the name of *low Comedy*. If we examine, with an impartial and diſcerning eye, many of the pieces which they throw into the latter claſs, we ſhall find

in them at leaſt as great a ſhare of invention, and as much wit and ſpirit, as in thoſe other pieces for which they expreſs ſo high an eſteem; and it is not leſs true, that there requires full as much genius and merit in an actor to ſucceed in theſe low parts, as wou'd ſerve him to make a principal figure among the high ones; or that the performers who acquit themſelves well in theſe, deſerve as much applauſe, as thoſe who excell in the others.

Perhaps there is as much wit in the part of the ſimple *Tom* in the *Conſcious Lovers*, as in the favourite *Bevill*; and tho' the generality of our audiences, for want of the advantages of a pow-der'd perriwig and lac'd coat, have not chanc'd to find it out, yet till Mr. *Barry* play'd *Bevill*, there has been generally as much merit in the performance of the man, as in that of the maſter. We are ready to allow that there are ſome qualifications neceſſary for the performer in genteel comedy, which the player of the lower characters may do without; among theſe are a good perſon, a genteel deportment, and an acquaintance with the manner of people in high life; and yet 'tis but very lately that we have found people who thought theſe abſolutely neceſſary to the playing them.

Both kinds find it their buſineſs to preſent us with copies of human nature: But the performer in genteel comedy, never ſhews us nature otherwiſe than as poliſh'd by education; whereas the player of low comedy gives it us without this advantage and improvement. Setting aſide this difference, both have not only the ſame end to purſue, which is to ridicule our own foibles to us, or to entertain us with the repreſentation of

of the ſallies of an extravagant imagination, or the weakneſſes of an unſettled heart; but both draw all the peculiar excellencies in their art, all the fineſſes of their play, from the very ſame ſources. The actors in low comedy, entertain us either by the whimſical air they give their own characters, or by the talent they have of making us merry at the expence of the other perſons in the play.

There are a thouſand different ways of executing the firſt: That to which the player however ought of all others to have the firſt recourſe, is to profit of all the circumſtances which may fall in his way to make his character ſtriking to the audience. Is it a *miſer* that he repreſents? If he enters his apartment, and finds two candles burning upon the table, he ought very carefully to put out one of them. Is it a man who affects liberality, extravagance and a perfect careleſneſs about money? If he is conſtrain'd to beſtow ſomething upon any perſon that is on the ſtage with him, let him expreſs in his countenance an unwillingneſs to part with his money, tho' he pretends to give it with the utmoſt profuſion and eaſe; let him alſo purpoſely drop a few pieces, and as ſoon as the man's back is turn'd, let him carefully pick them up, and put 'em up into his purſe again.

There is ſcarce any one of thoſe which we diſtinguiſh by the name of ſimple characters, but is in reality a mixt one. Every imperfection we ſee in a man, is properly an aſſemblage of a great number of other imperfections. The comedian therefore, in order to ſucceed perfectly in the character he plays, ought to decompoſe the folly he is to repreſent to us, to examine each

part of it ſeparately, and in conſequence of this to unfold to us every ingredient of the whole, and every thing that has connexion with the principal foible, ſo far as the nature of the part will admit of it. We are in real life accuſtom'd to ſee a man who is full of envy always moroſe and ſurly; and a fool always ſhews that he is perfectly contented with himſelf, and expects that every body elſe ſhou'd be as well contented with him.

Above all other things the player of *low Comedy*, or, as it may perhaps be more properly hereafter call'd, *humourous Comedy*, ought to make it his buſineſs to copy the ridiculous habits and peculiarities that are found about that ſort of people the character he is to act in is drawn from; and theſe, provided they do not jar with the reſt of the piece, are always to be made to accompany the characteriſing folly. Does he repreſent a ſtateſman, a *Polonius*? Let him have a wildneſs and hurry in his air, and ſcarce ever attend to what is ſaid to him, or ſo much as look at the man to whom he addreſſes his diſcourſe. Is his character that of a pretty gentleman of the age? Let him liſp and clip his words, and ſoften the vowels of every ſyllable. He muſt not only make his advantage of every the leaſt circumſtance that can ſerve to introduce the ridiculous ſide of his character; he is not only to expoſe before us every ſubordinate folly that enters into the compoſition of his capital one; but after he has added to theſe all the tricks and habits that fools of the ſame ſtamp have in common life, if the author has chanc'd to neglect the keeping up the character in any particular inſtance,

ſtance, he ought to ſupply from his own imagination all that is wanting to make it of a piece with the reſt.

If he plays the part of a footman to ſome inſolent rich man, let the audience ſee in him what they never fail to obſerve in ſuch a fellow in real life, a mimickry of the maſter's manner and deportment; let him take up the tone of voice, the toſs of the head, and the whole air of the fool he ſerves; and if he has occaſion to be upon the ſtage at the ſame time with ſome honeſt perſon of an ordinary trade, let him take care that the audience may read in his looks and in his geſture all that pleaſure which people of this low condition take in inſulting thoſe, whoſe ſtate of life they envy, tho' they are too idle to fall into it.

The fools in *Shakeſpear*'s plays would make an excellent figure on the ſtage, if this ſort of mimickry were kept up in them. There is not one of theſe who does not take upon him the air of ſomebody of importance in one part or other of his character, and often that of ſeveral different kinds of people in the ſeveral parts of the ſame play. Let us only recollect the fool in *As you like it*; what infinite ſcope for pleaſantries of this kind is there in the philoſophic ſpeech *Shakeſpear* has put into this fellow's mouth, when talking to a perſon whom he ſuppoſes more a fool than himſelf, and who aſks him how he likes a ſhepherd's life? he anſwers him,

" Truly, ſhepherd, in reſpect of itſelf, it is a
' good life; but in reſpect that it is a ſhepherd's
' life, it is naught: in reſpect that it is ſolitary, I
' like it very well, but in reſpect that it is private,
' it is a very vile life. Now in reſpect that it is in

'the fields, it pleaſes me well; but in reſpect that 'it is not in the court it is tedious; as it is a ſpare 'life, look you, it fits my humour very well, but 'as there is no more plenty in it, it goes much 'againſt my ſtomach. Haſt thou any philoſophy 'in thee, ſhepherd?"

With all the intrinſick merit of this ſpeech, with all its true humour, it at the utmoſt only draws from us an indolent ſmile upon the ſtage: And why? becauſe the player who acts the part wants that addreſs which we have been recommending.

It is ſpoke in a ſort of unmeaning, yet affected tone, and is truly a fool's ſpeech, as we hear it. We will not name any perſon upon this occaſion, but there is one man in the world famous for ſpeaking theſe kind of nothings, with all the ſolemnity of a philoſopher.

If the player, before he acts this part again, would throw himſelf into this gentleman's way and catch his manner, we would promiſe him a much better reception.

There is another piece of infinite humour in the ſame character, which ſhares the ſame bad fate; this is the account which this celebrated fool gives of the duel he had like to have fought, but that it prov'd to be upon the *ſeventh cauſe*. He tells *Jaques*, who had been out of the world enough not to underſtand this ſort of language, that

"The lye was ſeven times remov'd; as thus, ſir. 'I did diſlike the cut of a certain courtier's beard; 'he ſent me word, if I ſaid his beard was not cut

'well

'well he was in the mind that it was; this is call'd 'the retort courteous: if I ſent him word again, 'I thought it was not well cut; he would ſend 'me word he cut it to pleaſe himſelf; this is 'called the quip modeſt: if again it was not well 'cut, he diſabled my judgment; this is called 'the reply churliſh: if again it was not well cut, 'he would anſwer I ſpake not true; this is called 'the reproof valiant: if again it was not well cut, 'he would ſay I lie; this is called the counter-'check quarrelſome, and ſo the lie circumſtantial 'and the lie direct.——Now I dared go no far-'ther with him than the lie circumſtantial, nor 'he durſt not give me the lie direct, and ſo we 'meaſured ſwords and parted."

There is a ſpirit of humour in this ſpeech that compels us to laugh, let it be deliver'd how it will; but how much greater would the pleaſure be to us if we heard it ſpoken in the tone and accent of one of the youths of the preſent time, who always take care to quarrel by rule and meaſure.

The judicious player in this way will alſo find infinite funds for humour in the conduct of the paſſions that occur in his character. The actreſs who is to repreſent in this ſtyle a young, innocent, and unpractis'd creature, ought to take every occaſion to diſcover her thoughts when they ought to be kept ſecret, by her looks, her geſtures, her ſighs, or whatever other incident may ſuit beſt with the circumſtances: is ſhe to repreſent a cunning creature, who is to diſſemble love, and that under pretence of wanting to hide it? let her watch every look of the perſon

ſhe is to deceive, and find a thouſand impertinent opportunities of ogling and ſighing at him.

There are, beſide theſe, a thouſand other ways of adding to the ſpirit the author has given the character, all eaſily in the player's power, if he will only ſtudy the occaſions of them: would he throw yet more ridicule into his character, let his actions be in ſome caſes directly contrary to his intentions. We ſhould never fail to be diverted by the lover who, while he is tranſported with rage and fury at the falſhood of his miſtreſs, and makes the moſt ſolemn vows to fly her ſight for ever afterwards, is all the while walking towards her lodgings.

The half deaf meſſenger who repeats aloud, as he goes along, the buſineſs which he was enjoyn'd to keep as the profoundeſt ſecret; or the Iriſh footman, who being order'd to go a certain way to a ſtreet where he is to deliver two letters, the one at a houſe on the right hand, and the other at one on the left, finds his way in at the wrong end, and by punctually obeying his orders delivers both the letters wrong, will always be ſecure of applauſe: theſe, and a variety of other inſtances, may give hints to the actor which he may copy into his part on parallel occaſions.

Beſides thus contriving all poſſible means to make his own character ridiculous, the comedian is often to think of every poſſible method of raiſing a laugh at the expence of the other perſons in the play: this is the great ſubject of the fineſſe in comic playing, and this is often to be done by the aſſiſtance the play itſelf gives, when properly attended to and judiciouſly managed.

The aſſiſtances the player in this way receives from the play itſelf, are of two kinds; the one dictates

dictates his leſſon wholly to him, and there is no more requir'd to profit from it, than that he repeat his ſpeeches punctually and literally: the other kind is not leſs eminent in its uſe, but can only ſerve the player in proportion as he knows how to employ it to advantage. In this there are certain delicate ironies, certain miſchievous alluſions, which may be made very intelligible to the audience, tho' they are not literally pronounced; theſe furniſh the player with means of ſhining in his part, but then they require to be play'd off with all his art, in order to appear in their full beauty.

One of the moſt certain reſources the comedian will find in the piece itſelf to divert us at the expence of the reſt of the perſons, is the opportunity the author ſometimes gives him to parody a part of their characters; theſe burleſque imitations frequently occur in comedy: they are ſometimes to be underſtood to be dictated by reſentment, as where the huſband in the *Old Batchelor* mimicks the tone of his wife's voice in her ſpeech to her gallant, *Lie upon your ſtomach, Mr.* Spintext; *lying upon your ſtomach will cure you of the cholic*; and ſometimes they are to be underſtood as mere mirth and pleaſantry.

But as much as theſe kinds of mimickry pleaſe us when they are deliver'd with a proper and judicious grace and nicety, ſo much do they offend us when cold, lifeleſs, and inſipid, and when they are forc'd upon us without theſe advantages. In the latter caſe the whole is a picture without life, in the former it is a picture which breathes, which thinks.

Many

Many of our actors who are free enough in the uſe of theſe imitations, make no other diſtinction in the ſeveral kinds of them than ſuch as obviouſly reſult from the age, ſex, and condition of the character; but thoſe of a ſuperior merit find other innumerable differences in the expreſſion of them, each of which has its charms for a judicious ſpectator.

When the ſuperior actors in a comedy cannot draw from the author thoſe aſſiſtances which they ſtand in need of to give occaſion to theſe fineſſes in their playing, they do it from their own genius, and under the direction of this bold but unerring guide, they never fail to open ſeveral ways by which they may naturally and regularly arrive at the end they have in view. Very frequently there occur accidents that give room for contradiction, and which give the player an opportunity of entertaining the audience out of his own ſtock; theſe always give us the more joy, as they occaſion the more concern and uneaſineſs in the perſon they are addreſs'd to: as, if two people get into a houſe together, where it is the buſineſs of one of them to keep the family in ignorance that he is there; and the other, by the loudneſs of his voice, by hawking, ſtamping, and a thouſand other noiſes that he contrives to make, keeps him in a continual alarm at the fear of a diſcovery. A lover thinks he cannot be in too much hurry to read a letter that his footman acquaints him he has brought from his miſtreſs; and the fellow plagues him with a thouſand delays, ſearches all his pockets ten times over for it, and at length, after great preparation, gives him another paper in the place of it. Contradictions like theſe, thrown in with judgment, and conducted within the

the bounds of moderation, have a double advantage in comedy, as they make us laugh, not only at the perſon who plays them off, but at the concern and impatience of the perſon who is plagued with them.

We ſhould ſwell this chapter into a volume, if we were to recount all the means by which the player in repreſenting one part may give us occaſion to be merry at the expence of the reſt; we ſhall therefore wave this ſubject, and paſs on to the advice we have to give the players concerning the uſe of theſe fineſſes of their profeſſion.

CHAP. XV.

Rules which ought to be obſerv'd in the uſe of Fineſſes.

IT is eaſy to ſee, from many of the examples we have already given, that ſeveral of the fineſſes of the player tend to no other end than to render the repreſentation the more agreeable. Even theſe ought, as far as it is poſſible, as well as thoſe which are intended to give it a greater air of truth and reality, to ariſe naturally from what the author has himſelf thrown into the parts; and when they want this advantage, they ought to be ſo carefully introduc'd as not to appear far fetch'd, or forc'd into the play.

Above all things, the player muſt be upon his guard not to introduce things by way of embelliſhment which contradict the nature of the part he acts, and not to throw too many marks of diſcernment, wit, or underſtanding, into a character which the author meant to repreſent as having very little of theſe qualifications; he is never

never to throw into his part a fineſſe which, tho' it may be apt to produce a good effect upon the generality of an audience, yet ſpeaks his forgetfulneſs of the circumſtance and ſituation of the character; and finally, he is not to add any thing that ſuppoſes a perfect uſe of reaſon, at a time when the anxiety he is under ſcarce gives him opportunity to attend fully to any thing, and under which he ought hardly to know what he ſays or does.

Theſe rules are founded on a general one, which is indeed the baſis of all the reſt; that is, when there is no adding the fineſſe without injuring the propriety and appearance of reality in the ſcene, it is always better to play with naked truth, than with all the embelliſhments of a falſe decoration.

We have hardly known a comic character in which more of the fineſſe has been introduc'd, or that with greater ſucceſs, than by Mrs. *Pritchard* in that of *Roſalind*; her play with her lover is full of it; but this judicious actreſs has the prudence to know, that tho' this addreſs is agreeable in many places, it is not neceſſary in, nay it is not compatible with, all. Where ſhe falls in with the luckleſs ſhepherd and his cruel miſtreſs, ſhe ſees merit enough in the matter ſhe has to deliver without any additional flouriſhes; ſhe therefore reſerves them for future occaſions, and ſeems there proud of ſhewing us the beauty of ſpeaking plainly and ſimply: with how perfectly natural an accent does ſhe deliver the ſpeech ſhe has on this occaſion, and yet how pleas'd is every body that hears her!

And

And why, I pray you, who may be your mother?
That you inſult, exult, and all at once,
Over the wretched. What tho' you have ſome beauty,
(As, by my faith, I ſee no more in you,
Than without candle may go dark to bed)
Muſt you be therefore proud and pityleſs?
Why, what means this, why do your look on me?
I ſee no more in you than in the ordinary
Of nature's ſale's work: ods, my little life,
I think ſhe means to tangle mine eyes too;
No, faith, proud miſtreſs, hope not after it;
'Tis not your inky brows, your black ſilk hair,
Your bugle eye-balls, or your cheeks of cream,
That can enchant my ſpirits to your worſhip.
You fooliſh ſhepherd, why do you follow her,
Like foggy ſouth, puffing with wind and rain?
You are a thouſand times a properer man
Than ſhe a woman: 'tis ſuch fools as you
That make the world full of ill-favour'd children.
'Tis not her glaſs but you that flatter her,
And out of you ſhe ſees herſelf more proper
Than any of her lineaments can ſhew her.
But, miſtreſs, know yourſelf, down on your knees,
And thank heav'n faſting for a good man's love,
For I muſt tell you friendly in your ear,
Sell when you can, you are not for all markets:
Cry the man mercy, love him, take his offer;
So take her to thee, ſhepherd.——

The

The native eaſe and ſpirit with which this excellent performer delivers this, may ſerve as a pattern to all that follow her in ſcenes of a like kind: her own paſſions have no ſhare in the matter, therefore ſhe exerts none of them; but with a pert and pleaſant raillery, gives a leſſon that pleaſes by its own unornamented beauties, more than it could do, with all the additional graces in the world. An inſtance of the ſame kind we have in a ſoliloquy of *Iago*'s in *Othello*, in which, after an infinite deal of fineſſe on every occaſion, Mr. *Macklin* firſt ſet an example which has been followed by Mr. *Garrick*, of delivering plainly and without ornament, a ſpeech in which we have been us'd to ſee a world of unnatural contortion of face and abſurd bye-play. The place we allude to is this:

If I can faſten but one cup upon him, [*ſpeaking of* Caſſio]
With that which he hath drank to night already,
He'll be as full of quarrel and offence
As my young miſtreſs' dog.
Now, my ſick fool, *Rodrigo*,
Whom love has turn'd almoſt the wrong ſide out
To *Deſdemona*, hath to night carous'd
Potations pottle deep, and he's to watch:
Three lads of *Cyprus*, noble ſwelling ſpirits,
The very elements of this warlike iſle,
Have I to night fluſtred with flowing cups,
And they watch too: now 'mongſt this flock of drunkards,
Am I to put our *Caſſio* on ſome action
That may offend the iſle. But here they come.

The

The part of *Iago* is ſo full of occaſions of fineſſe and additional bye-play, that we are pleas'd to ſee in this place a plain ſentiment plainly delivered. If a man is full of his ornaments at every period, he loſes the merit of them; they ſeem natural to him, not the effects of a ſkill in his profeſſion: we love to ſee him naked in his manner, at times, that we may reliſh his flouriſhes the better, where they are properly apply'd.

To this obſervation we may add another, which is, that it is more prudent to uſe no fineſſe at all, than to hazard defects in it; ſince, in regard to all agreeable impreſſions, we had rather not feel them at all, than feel them but imperfectly. Sometimes the actor, in his attempt to perform his part with more delicacy than ordinary, plays it with very little juſtice or propriety; the artful additions that he may make to the bare words of his part, ſucceed only in proportion as they are derived from the true ſource; and he is not always able to keep his imagination within theſe bounds. While that agent profuſely throws about its treaſures, it does not always accommodate them to the circumſtances from which only they can obtain their power of pleaſing, and when it refuſes freely and naturally to aſſiſt the player, he is never to attempt to preſs it into his ſervice.

Provided the comedian acts with truth and juſtice, he will never fail ſufficiently to pleaſe a great part of his audience: we may remember a time when *Macklin*, who had for many years perform'd with applauſe characters in comedy that ſuited him, and had in a peculiar manner ſucceeded in the uſe of an infinite number of the fineſſes in playing, was reduc'd, by the neceſſities

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of the company he was engag'd in, to play the parts of Sir *Novelty Faſhion*, Lord *Foppington*, and the reſt of that kind: he had the judgment to know that he was here out of his proper ſphere, and he never ventured at the fineſſes which he had been ſo famous for in the parts that naturally fell in his way; but as he always play'd naturally and with juſtice, he received the applauſe of the multitude in theſe characters as well as in the reſt; and probably he would have had leſs of it, if forcing his imagination to bring in a thouſand fineſſes, he had expos'd himſelf to the neceſſity of playing with leſs truth.

CHAP. XVI.

Of Bye-play, or what are called Stage-Tricks.

THE variety of fineſſes which fall in the way of the player who has judgment and imagination, is very great: ſome of them produce their effect upon the audience, tho' they happen not to be looking upon the actor at the time; others addreſs themſelves wholly to the ſight: the laſt depend entirely upon the action, and therefore are loſt if they are not attended to by the eye. Theſe are rather of a lower kind than the others, and are diſtinguiſhed from them under the name of ſtage-tricks. We have a way of uſing the ſame phraſe alſo to expreſs the artificial means an author of a comedy finds of conducting his ſcenes, and introducing incidents, ſo as to make them the moſt ſtriking to an audience: in this ſenſe of the term it is of a very extenſive meaning, but in that in which it is apply'd to the player, it is confin'd within narrower bounds, and ex-

expreſſes nothing but ſuch action as ſerves to picture out the ſentiments of the characters in the ſcene, in the moſt expreſſive and the moſt pleaſing manner.

It may be obſerved in general, that provided this bye-play is conducted with judgment, we cannot have too much of it in comedy; every kind of it has its place in this ſort of plays; comedies are written to be acted, not to be barely repeated; and when we ſay of a new one, that it will pleaſe better in the cloſet than it did on the ſtage, we paſs but a very coarſe compliment upon the players who perform'd in it.

The bye-play, like all other kinds of fineſſes, contributes either to the giving the ſcene a greater air of truth and reality, or elſe ſolely to the rendering it more pleaſing. That part of it which belongs to the firſt, has its place in tragedy as well as in comedy; the other in comedy only, as being below the dignity of the other kind of repreſentations.

It is to be obſerved of every ſpecies of it, that the more intimate a connexion it has with the intrigue and buſineſs of the play, the more perfect it is in its kind, and the more it will always pleaſe. It is not however abſolutely eſſential to it to have this cloſe connexion; 'tis in many caſes ſufficient that it be not contradictory to the ſcheme and intent of the whole, and that it have probability on its ſide. In the *Royal Merchant* or *Beggars Buſh*, the meſſenger who is ſent to the young merchant from his miſtreſs, is a beggar; and as ſuch, while the merchant is employed in reading the letter, he takes up the other part of his profeſſion, and picks his pocket. This is not at all neceſſary or eſſential to the intrigue of the play,

play, but it is no way contradictory to it, and it employs a moment in which we ſhou'd otherwiſe be at a ſtand, and that by an incident quite in character for the perſon who does it.

All bye-play, as well that which contributes to the truth and reality of the action, as that which ſerves only to render it more pleaſing in the repreſentation, may be in ſome caſes executed by one perſon alone, whereas in others it cannot be perform'd but by the concurrence of ſeveral. In both theſe circumſtances, the manners of the characters are carefully to be kept up to, and the peculiar circumſtances of age and ſex, as well as thoſe of rank and education, cloſely obſerv'd; where any thing of this is omitted, we are ſhock'd at what was meant to entertain us, and we condemn that as abſurdity, which was meant as fineſſe. It agrees very well with the nature of comedy in general that it be play'd with freedom; yet we are to baniſh indecency and libertiniſm from it. Every joke that a lady may not enjoy with a ſmile that does not reflect upon her modeſty, is to be baniſh'd from the part of the actor, whatever be the quality or circumſtances of the character he plays. We are not to allow of any thing which ſinks into flat buffoonry. The player is not to traveſty or burleſque the muſe, when the poet has taken care to preſerve to her all her native dignity.

When the bye-play which we are recommending the uſe of, depends on the conjunct performances of ſeveral different actors, all that are to be concern'd in it ought to concert their plan of acting together in ſuch a manner beforehand, that there may appear all the neceſſary preciſion

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in the geſtures and motions of each in regard to thoſe of the reſt.

When two actors who are together upon the ſtage, are ſuppoſed to be both affected by the ſame impreſſion, their action ought undoubtedly to be of the ſame kind; but ſtill there is a difference to be obſerved in the degree, otherwiſe we feel the want of propriety, and confound the two characters. There are two rules which will ſerve the player in every occaſion of this kind.

Probability requires that the degree of expreſſion in each be proportion'd to that of the intereſt which each has in the action that occaſions their emotions. In the repreſentations upon the ſtage, the caſe is exactly the ſame as in pictures. Whatever is the principal figure in the piece, ought always to have the privilege of attracting our regard beyond the reſt.

It is alſo as neceſſary a circumſtance that the attitudes and geſtures of the ſeveral actors be ſo contrived as to have as much contraſt as poſſible between them. Every thing on the ſtage ought to have the appearance of truth and reality. We carry our love of diverſity ſo far on this occaſion, that we expect the actors not only to be different from one another, but that every one of them, in every part that he acts, ſhou'd differ from himſelf in every other part, at leaſt in ſome particulars that may ſtrike and affect us.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

Of Variety in Playing.

IT is evident that variety, or a power of appearing in very different forms, is an eſſential requiſite to thoſe actors who have an ambition to excel in both tragedy and comedy: And it is ſcarce leſs plain that the ſame qualification is alſo neceſſary to thoſe who propoſe it to themſelves to excel in only one of theſe provinces, provided they intend to gain applauſe in more than one ſingle character: Of the two, however, variety is more neceſſary to the perſon who propoſes to excel in playing comedy, than to him who attempts to make a figure principally in tragedy.

Comedy takes in a vaſt compaſs: It extends indifferently to every kind of character; every original is proper for its purpoſe that can poſſibly be made to entertain an audience in the copy. Tragedy, by the cuſtoms of the world, is allow'd leſs freedom in the choice of its ſubjects; it preſents us with the characters of only great and illuſtrious perſons, auguſt heroes, or noble villains.

The principal intent of tragedy is to affect us deeply by the recital of uncommon misfortunes; or elſe to aſtoniſh, and at the ſame time inſtruct us by great examples. It is no objection to the merit of the performance, that the heroes of one ſtory repreſent in many things thoſe of another; provided it leads us on thro' uncertainty, terrors, ſorrow, and even tears, to the very cataſtrophe, we are content; and when the actors introduc'd upon

upon the ſtage, are plac'd in a new and an intereſting ſituation, and while they act and ſpeak conſiſtently with the dignity of tragedy and with that ſituation, we never think it neceſſary to enquire whether they are or are not the ſame ſort of characters that we have already ſeen a thouſand times in the ſame place. We are even very well pleaſed to ſee the ſame heroe appear a ſecond time as a new character upon the ſtage, provided we ſee him under ſome other circumſtances, and are intereſted in his fate by ſome new means.

Thus the performer in tragedy, even tho' he puſh his ſucceſs ſo far as to attempt every kind of character within the compaſs of it, and plays one night in the tender and affecting ſtrain, another in the majeſtic, and a third in the fierce and terrible, has nothing more to ſtudy, than to be able to repreſent with proper dignity the man of conſequence; or, at the utmoſt, he has only a very few characters, and thoſe all alike in many things, to copy. The actor, on the other hand, who propoſes to himſelf to excel in comedy, has infinitely more difficulties to ſtruggle with, and has an abſolute neceſſity, beyond all other things, for that variety which we are treating of in this chapter, provided he does not tye himſelf down to ſome one peculiar caſt of characters. It is his buſineſs to copy nature in her ſeveral forms, and to appear to us one night as the courtier, another as the citizen; one night as the gay ſprightly beau, another as the grave and ſober magiſtrate. He is to repreſent men the moſt different in their birth and ſituation in life, in their profeſſions, and even in their way of thinking; he is to be alternatively inſolent and

fawning: In one piece majeſtick, and imperious, in another humble and timorous. At one time he is to be jocoſe, and at another ſerious; one day indifferent, and another the moſt tender lover; at one time ſimple and unmeaning, and at another full of ſubtilty, artifice, and addreſs. He muſt every day not only change his whole exterior form and figure, but his very tone and accent muſt vary in his ſeveral characters, and he muſt even ſeem to change his very being.

The audience expect all this variety in the man who claims their applauſe as a general actor in comedy; and the player himſelf is as ſenſible of the neceſſity of it, and of the juſtice of their expectations from him, as they are: he knows that there is this difference in the requiſites for performance in tragedy, and thoſe for comedy. The generality of our players ſeem alſo to have a very juſt ſenſe of the variety they muſt be able to command in themſelves, when they undertake to play in both capacities, as it is now the general taſte among them to do; and they ſeem not leſs ſenſible of the vaſt changes they muſt be able to aſſume in playing the moſt different characters in comedy.

Scarce any man among them is ſo abſurd, as to think of playing the *Miſer* and a *Lord Foppington* in the ſame tone; but when we have allow'd them this, we are to add that the very beſt of them are apt to fall into an error that gives us great diſtaſte; this is their ſuppoſing that however neceſſary an abſolute difference of manner, deportment, and delivery, is to the playing theſe different characters, that they are under no neceſſity of varying their play, when they perform the ſame kind of parts. This gives them

them an unnatural uniformity, which never fails to leſſen them among all who are able to judge of what an author meant.

Whatever general reſemblance there may be between certain characters in different plays, there are always ſome diſtinguiſhing ſtrokes in each. The *Miſer* of the play which takes its name from that character, and the *Gomez* of the *Spaniſh Fryar*, are characters which have a great deal of general likeneſs; but the actor who endeavours to play them both in the ſame taſte, from his opinion that there is no occaſion for his exerting any variety in them, will never pleaſe any of his audience, but thoſe who have not taſte enough to ſee the diſtinction their authors have made between them.

We have before recommended it to the judicious actor, to decompoſe his parts, and regulate himſelf by the ſeveral ſubordinate paſſions, of which the grand one that makes his character is form'd. There is no circumſtance in which this leſſon will be of more uſe, than this of the performing parts which have a general reſemblance, yet which the author meant to diſtinguiſh by many things from one another, and which the better part of an audience will expect to ſee repreſented under thoſe diſtinctions; let him examine ſeparately every ſubordinate paſſion in which ever of them he is to act, and he will naturally and neceſſarily, provided that he determines to act with truth, fall into a diverſity of playing in them, which will in many caſes quite deface the general reſemblance; and give his audience variety where they will be very glad of it, tho' they did not expect it: And in all the characters of this kind, he will be ſure to have no more re-

ſemblance between them than the author intended there ſhou'd be.

The raving of *Oreſtes* and the pretended madneſs of *Edgar* may furniſh us with an inſtance of this kind. We remember a player who never fail'd of great applauſe in both theſe characters, and yet who play'd them both ſo like one another, that *Oreſtes* might have been *Edgar*, or *Edgar Oreſtes*, for any thing the audience wou'd have diſtinguiſh'd of the matter. But tho' the applauſe of a multitude may follow noiſe and raving; there are not wanting in every audience judges, who can condemn, and who never fail'd to reſent this blunder with all the contempt it deſerved.

We have at preſent a player, grown old in the profeſſion, us'd to an uncommon variety of parts in it, and among the reſt to theſe; and who gives us both with a ſufficient degree of ſpirit, and yet both as different, as the rage of a *Hotſpur* is from that of a *Bajazet*. In the character of *Oreſtes*, we read in him a heart torn to pieces with anguiſh and with rage, and which gives room in his ravings for no other thoughts: In the other we read a ſettled ſorrow thro' all the fancy'd wildneſs of his deportment, and can ſee that it is but put on, and that all the while ſome other paſſion wholly poſſeſſes his heart.

It has been the miſtaken cuſtom of many who have play'd *Edgar*, to beſtow all their care and attention on the mad part, as if of the utmoſt conſequence: Mr. *Ryan* has judg'd otherwiſe. See him in it, and he is mad enough, tho' not mad with that vehemence which exhauſts the ſpirits of the others, and leaves them no power to expreſs the more affecting things that follow

thoſe

thoſe ſcenes. There is not perhaps on the ſtage a more moving ſcene than that of *Edgar*'s diſcovering himſelf to *Cordelia*. *Shakeſpear* meant the mad things that precede it principally as foils to it; and 'tis in this ſenſe that the player we are commending in the part performs it. We do not perceive that he wants ſpirit in his entering in all the appearance of madneſs, with

Away—The foul fiend follows me—
Thro' the ſharp hawthorn blows the cold wind—
Mum—Get thee to bed and warm thee.

Who gives any thing to poor *Tom*, whom the foul fiend has led thro' fire and thro' flame, thro' buſhes and bogs; that has laid knives under his pillow, and halters in his pew; that has made him proud of heart to ride on a bay trotting horſe over four inch bridges, to courſe his own ſhadow for a traitor.

Swithin footed thrice the cold,
He met the night mare and her nine-fold,
'Twas there he did appoint her;
He bid her alight and her troth plight,
And arroynt the witch, arroynt her.

Nor afterwards when he has diſcovered *Cordelia* in his wild anſwer to her queſtioning him about the king,

Who relieves poor *Tom* that ſleeps upon the nettle
With the hedge-pig for his pillow.

He has the addreſs indeed to throw an uncommon degree of ſpirit into this laſt ſpeech by

way of contraſt to what is to follow; but how are we ſtruck when we ſee him, from all this pretended raving, ſink into reaſon, and tell the princeſs, I am *Edgar*.

My father ſeeks my life, which I preſerv'd
In hopes of ſome bleſs'd minute to oblige
Diſtreſs'd *Cordelia*: And the gods have given it
That thought alone prevail'd with me to take
This frantick dreſs: To make the earth my bed
With theſe bare limbs, all change of ſeaſons bide,
Noon's ſcorching heat, and midnight's piercing cold,
To feed on offals, and to drink with herds;
To combat with the winds, and be the ſport
Of clowns, or what's more wretched yet, their pity.

If we are deeply affected with the heart-felt emotions with which he delivers this; how are we charm'd with the ſpirit which he exerts in ſpeaking afterwards, when ſhe has avow'd her love to him.

Look I have flint and ſteel, the implements
Of wandering lunaticks, I'll ſtrike a light
And make a fire beneath this ſhed to dry
Thy ſtorm-drench'd garments, e're thou lieſt to reſt thee.
Then fierce and wakeful as th' *Heſperian* dragon,
I'll watch beſide thee, to protect thy ſleep.
Mean while the ſtars ſhall dart their kindeſt beams,
And angels viſit my Cordelia's dreams.

Theſe are the real beauties of the part of *Edgar*: the galleries may be affected by noiſe, and a ſeries of frantick actions, which neither they nor the perſon who exhibits them under-

ſtand;

ſtand; but 'tis the change to reaſon, the contraſt of theſe paſſionate and affecting ſpeeches alone, that charms the more judicious part of an audience; and the making the madneſs not the principal part of the character, but ſubſervient to theſe, is the great ſecret of that difference which we are applauding Mr. *Ryan* for making between the raving of *Edgar*, and that of *Oreſtes*.

We have had occaſion to obſerve that this player, judicious as he is, is blameable in his ſparing himſelf thro' all the fourth act in the play in which he performs *Oreſtes*, in order to have a fund of ſpirits to ſupport him in the famous ſcene of raving. He carries this too far. He is ſo tame in paſſages that ought to move him ſtrongly, that we do not expect his violent raving afterwards: It appears unnatural in him, and the character is not kept up. This is one of thoſe inſtances, in which we find it is in vain that the poet has done his part, if the actor fails in his: Any body that had never read this play, and only ſeen it acted with Mr. *Ryan* in this character, wou'd cenſure the author for being faulty in the manners, for not preſerving the characters of his principal perſons, but letting *Oreſtes* be, in the courſe of an act, two very different men. He has however done his part: Every thing in the character is of a piece with the reſt, and whatever paſſes before the raving ſcene, if properly executed by the player, is connected with it, is preparatory to it, and wou'd make us expect no leſs from the prince, under the provoking circumſtances we ſee him in afterwards, than what follows.

We give a place to this free cenſure of a player we much eſteem, with the ſame view,

that we have in every other, we have made here; we are hopeful that the hint may be taken, and the fault amended: And after we have ſaid this, it is but juſtice to him to allow that in the raving ſcene, he is at leaſt equal to any body at preſent on the ſtage. There is not a ſentence in it that he has not ſtudy'd; not an attitude in all that ſeems his utmoſt wildneſs, that is not the effect of the moſt ſerious conſideration, or that does not tally exactly with the peculiar terror of that moment; not a tone of his voice that is not appropriated to the very paſſage he delivers, or that wou'd not be abſurd in any other; and we may add to this, that there is no part on the *Engliſh* ſtage which will allow of ſo much vehemence as this, nor any that is play'd with ſo much.

The murder'd lovers wait me—Hark, they call!
Nay if your blood ſtill reeks, I'll mingle mine.
One tomb will hold us all;
In dizzy—clouds!—quite loſt in utter darkneſs—
Guide me, ſome friendly pilot, thro' the ſtorm.
I ſhiver! O I freeze!—So:—Light returns;
'Tis the grey dawn—
See *Pylades*—Behold!
I am encompaſs'd with a ſea of blood,
The crimſon billows—O! my brain's on fire!
Pyrrhus ſtand off! What wouldſt thou?—How he glares!
What envious hand has clos'd thy wounds?—
Have at thee,
It is *Hermione* that ſtrikes—Confuſion!—
She catches *Pyrrhus* in her arms—O ſave me!
How terrible ſhe looks! She knits her brow!
She frowns me dead! She frights me into madneſs!

Who

Whoever remembers Mr. *Ryan*'s delivering this ſpeech, will not think we have ſaid too much in his praiſe: Whoever remembers the following, which is the ſecond raving after he has come to himſelf a little, will own we cannot ſay enough.

Who talks of reaſon? Better to have none
Than not to have enough—Run ſome one, tell my *Greeks*
I will not have them touch the king—Now! now!
I blaze again! See there!———Look where they come
A ſhoal of furies! How they ſwarm about me!
My terror!—Hide me—O! their ſnaky locks!
Hark how they hiſs! See, ſee—their flaming brands
Now they let drive full at me—How they grin,
And ſhake their iron whips--my ears! what yelling!
And ſee! *Hermione*—She ſets them on,
O—I am ſtung to death!—Diſpatch me ſoon—
There take my heart, *Hermione!* tear it out—
Disjoint me!—kill me!—O my tortur'd ſoul!

When one conſiders the amazing difference between this madneſs and the ludicrous ſtuff that the pretending *Edgar* delivers, one wou'd be amaz'd that any man cou'd ſuppoſe the ſame ſort of geſtures and manner cou'd be proper to both. A ſucceeding age may not believe that there ever was a player who did, but we have ſeen it. The compariſon between ſuch a man and Mr. *Ryan*, is not neceſſary to ſhew us that the manner in which the latter performs theſe characters wou'd do honour to any body.

But it is not ſufficient for the obtaining applauſe from the niceſt judges, that the actor varies his manner, when he plays parts which ſeem, on a

ſlight view, ſomewhat to reſemble one another: He muſt even do it in thoſe which have the greateſt real reſemblance, for no two are wholly alike; nay, he muſt not omit it in the ſeveral parts of the ſame character in the ſame play; ſince in nature and reality there is no man of whatever peculiar turn of mind, that wou'd always preſerve it during the changes that the circumſtances he is thrown into in the courſe of a good comedy work in him.

The managers of our times, complain much of the ficklenеſs of their audiences; they tell us, that after ever ſo much expence employ'd on their parts, ever ſo much pains taken by the players, people are not contented to ſee the ſame piece many times over. They little imagine that the ſource of this complaint is the very want of variety, which we are here complaining of.

The keeping up a general ſameneſs throughout a character actuated at different times by very different paſſions, is one of the groſſeſt faults an actor who pretends to have any judgment can run into. But this is not all that may be ſaid of the ſubject of our not reliſhing frequent repetitions of the ſame piece. Beſide the avoiding this fault, the actor in comedy has an opportunity of adding new graces every time he plays a part, which wou'd keep up our attention to ever ſo many repeated repreſentations. It is certain that what nature inſpires will never appear diſtaſteful after once ſeeing; but nature has not in her that creeping ſameneſs that the player too often repreſents her under. If ſhe affects the ſame man a hundred times with the ſame accidents, he will indeed have the ſame kind of ſenſations every time, but he will not every time have exactly the ſame motions and geſtures to ſhew them by; nature has given us a thouſand ways of expreſ-

expreſſing in our geſture, our aſtoniſhment, our grief, our anger, &c. And why is the player, becauſe under the ſame circumſtances a dozen nights together, to give us but one of them in a conſtant repetition! 'tis this that helps to pall the ſame piece, however good, when daily repeated to us: We are ſenſible of this variety in our own natures of expreſſing even the ſame paſſion under the ſame circumſtances, and we are diſguſted to ſee the player, night after night, in the ſame parts of his character uſe the very ſame tone and cadence in his voice, the ſame attitude in his figure, and the ſame geſtures and motions of all kinds. This ought to be as tedious to us, as it wou'd be to be compell'd to contemplate hour after hour the ſame revolutions of the hand in a watch, which tho' juſt, no body ever thought pleaſing.

There is ſome peculiar bye-play naturally enough annexed to certain ſcenes in comedy, which we ſuffer very willingly over and over again, nay which we love the repeated uſe of; but then we wou'd not have even this every time ſervilely repeated in the ſame manner.

The reaſon why the modern actors are ſo very uniform, ſeems to be that they play rather from memory than from a feeling of the paſſions of their parts. When an actor, who has the true ſeeds of his art in him, who has genius, ſenſibility, and fire, performs a part in which he is thoroughly affected; when he has the command of himſelf ſo far that he is able to vary his manner occaſionally, his better way is then not to attempt the varying his geſtures and play as the main end of what he is about; let him ſuffer himſelf to be wholly poſſeſs'd of his part, let him

make the character as it were real to him, and nature will do the reſt: the power he has of varying his manner will exert itſelf without his particular attention to it, and tho' his ſenſe of the nature of the character will make him always appear in general the ſame man in it, he will yet always appear new.

CHAP. XVIII.

Of graces in Playing.

IS an actor ſenſible that his playing is perfectly juſt and true? Is it natural? In fine, is it properly varied? An audience will always admire and eſteem him in this caſe; but there will ſtill want ſomething more in order to their being charm'd with him whenever he appears; and he will ſee others of much leſs merit pleaſe infinitely more, unleſs he finds the way of joining to theſe advantages, the graces of delivery, and thoſe of action.

When we declare that every thing ought to be conducted with *Dignity* in tragedy, we ſay all that concerns the player in regard to it; we include in that ſingle word all the graces that belong to this ſpecies of playing. Thoſe that fall in the way of the actor in comedy, are on the other hand almoſt infinite; what we have already delivered under the head of fineſſes, belong principally to this article alſo; and much of what we have there deſcrib'd, may be indifferently expreſs'd by one or the other of theſe names.

The fineſſes in comedy are almoſt all of them properly enough arrang'd under the heads of graces: but there are, beſides theſe, ſeveral other

graces properly and peculiarly ſo call'd, which will make the buſineſs of this chapter.

Theſe are what above all other things raiſe the reputation of the player, and they make one of the principal embelliſhments of genteel comedy. 'Tis a misfortune to the world that all who have attempted to teach this elegant article of the players profeſſion, have found it as difficult to give any precepts in it, as to define what it truly is. What can be ſaid of it approaching towards a definition, is at the utmoſt only this, that it is the art of rendering nature elegant even in her defects, and this without altering her face. If the reader wou'd have a much better idea of what it is than all that words can give him, let him look upon Mr. *Garrick* in the characters of *Ranger*, of *Archer* and of *Benedick*. The ſecond of theſe is far from being of the number of thoſe he plays beſt, and yet there are in many parts of it certain occaſional graces thrown in, in his doing it, which we are apt to believe it wanted, even when the celebrated Mr. *Wilks* perform'd it. Perhaps the other two are as advantageous characters for a man of ſpirit to appear in, as the whole compaſs of the ſtage affords. They are in their own nature pleaſing to the higheſt degree; but we are to remember that the more beauties the author has thrown into them, the more they require that ſort of elegance in the performer, which we have been here deſcribing as the general ſpring of all the graces in the way of his profeſſion: And we have found lately that the character of *Othello* ſcarce had more ſhare in rendering the convuls'd actor, celebrated by Mr. *Foot*, contemptible, than the native beauties of *Ranger* may have in height-

heightening the defects of a performer, whose ſole merit is the being able to copy in it ſome few of the beauties of the player we have juſt mention'd.

Every performer who finds himſelf not cut out for giving all the graces, all the amiable eloquence we are deſcribing to his play in characters of this kind, will do wiſely to renounce all thought of genteel comedy. A man may be able to make a figure in a Duke of *Burgundy*, or even to bawl out the character of the Baſtard in *King Lear*, who is not equal to the taſk of performing the mad *Edgar*, or the afflicted king. There are enough of an audience who will think well of a man for being ſomething like what they are told they ought to be pleas'd with; and while the *Engliſh* ſtage ſtands as it does at preſent, when noiſe will go down for paſſion, and impudence for gaiety, the player who does not want theſe accompliſhments, will never want employment, nor even reputation, with the generality of the world; unleſs he runs out of his way, and attempts things which require the moſt oppoſite qualifications.

The advice we are ſo free in this place to give to the actors, is yet greatly more neceſſary to the actreſſes of the preſent time. Nothing is more certain than that a woman, unleſs ſhe is qualify'd to behave gracefully in a drawing room, is not capable of performing the part of *Lady Townley*, or of many other genteel female characters of the modern comedies. Nothing is more ſhocking to a ſpectator of any degree of judgment, than to ſee a woman enter upon the ſtage with the dreſs of a princeſs, and the air of an oyſter-wench. Whoever ſaw the daughter

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of *Proſpero* in the *Tempeſt* as lately acted in *Drury Lane*, will be very ſenſible of the force of this propoſition.

It might have been poſſible, we preſume, to have found out a perſon among the number of thoſe whom the manager of that houſe has taken into his pay this winter, either becauſe he thought he ſhou'd want them, or becauſe he intended the maſter of the other houſe ſhou'd, a player more like a Duke of *Savoy* than the perſon who acted her lover *Ferdinando*; but all the inſignificancy of that performer was loſt to the audience in the ſuperior abſurdity of the other; and ſcarce any body but inſtead of recollecting how much he was too bad for his dukedom, remember'd only how much too good he was for his miſtreſs.

We wou'd not be underſtood to aim this cenſure at the perſons of the performers we are ſpeaking of; we have ſeen them act in characters in which they have pleas'd their audience very well, and have very deſervedly been applauded for it; we mean only to remind the manager that we ſee his cunning, in ſparing his better performers, and know how we ought to judge of him for it.

In many parts in comedy it is leſs to the purpoſe for the actor to put on the deportment of a man whom good company had render'd a complaiſant and agreeable companion, than to give himſelf the air and manner of one whoſe whole habit is form'd upon the plan of that of the gayeſt and the moſt ſpirited people of the age.

The pleaſing gloſs, the elegant *Je ne ſçais quoi*, that charms us in this manner of playing ſome of

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the capital parts in genteel comedy, is not ſolely limited to the few parts we ſee it employed about, but is of uſe in every character and every circumſtance eſſential to that ſort of playing. It is to be varied indeed according to the peculiarities of the ſeveral characters it is exerted under, but it is ſtill to ſhew itſelf ſo, that we find it the certain mark that diſtinguiſhes the gayer people of high life from the reſt of the world.

The graces this gives to the playing of the perſon who has the command of it, are often thoſe lively, ſprightly and joyous ones which diſtinguiſh the younger part of the *Engliſh* nobility, and which wou'd be infinitely more charming than they are, nay infinitely more deſirable than any others, were they not ſo frequently found the marks of the want of the more ſolid and truly valuable accompliſhments. Sometimes they are leſs genteel, and conſequently leſs engaging, yet are they not then without their peculiar merit, provided that they are apply'd with propriety. The impertinent and idle gaiety of the modern race of *Petits maitres*, wou'd but very ill become the arrogant ſtateſman, or the preciſe and philoſophick *Cimberton* of the modern comedy; or it wou'd agree as ill with the character of a man who, fond of an imaginary importance, ſeeks only to impreſs a reſpect and awe upon the perſons he converſes with; yet it will be very happily apply'd in the character of *Jack Tattle*, and fifty other of the idle beaux of the ſtage.

As it is the buſineſs of the player to throw all the graces he is capable of into the characters of perſons who are to ſucceed by being amiable, this is not to be omitted even in thoſe characters where theſe ornamental ſtrokes ſeem leſs eſſen-

eſſential, provided that it can be done without running away from probability.

As we require graces in the actor even in places where he is copying the very defects of nature, which render the characters that are poſſeſs'd of them in ſome degree abſurd and prepoſterous, much more will it be allow'd us to do ſo, when the player is to repreſent perſons who are render'd ridiculous only by ſome foible of a higher kind, and eſpecially if they are ſuch as are to intereſt our thoughts in the conduct of the play.

In many characters the innocent and the ingenuous graces are the moſt proper, the moſt eſſential and ſtriking; in others, the great, the noble and the commanding, are the more proper for the purpoſe. Love wounds all hearts in the ſame manner; and the effects which its attacks produce are much the ſame in all ſorts of men; yet the pains it occaſions are felt differently according to the different circumſtances of education, birth and temper: and their effects are therefore to be expreſs'd differently by the actor, when playing characters different in theſe reſpects.

It is to the honour of the preſent actreſſes of the Engliſh ſtage, that they expreſs this difference better than perhaps thoſe of any age have done, and in general, greatly better than the men: love, in the mouths of many of our firſt actors, is much the ſame thing whether it be offer'd to an inferior, a ſuperior, or an equal; but Mrs. *Cibber* and Mrs. *Woffington* are well enough acquainted with that paſſion under the moſt different circumſtances, to have a peculiar turn of mind for each; they can add all the

graces

graces of gratitude and humility to love, when it has a ſuperior for its object; all the inſolence and affected diſdain that pride itſelf could inſpire, when it is offered from a inferior, and is to be return'd to him; and know the juſt gradations by which they may deſcend to countenance a paſſion by a return, and even to give an air of dignity to the weakneſs they are to acknowledge on ſuch occaſions.

Some peopie have been ſo fond of an imaginary difference between the genteel and low comedy, as to ſuppoſe that the making us laugh was the ſole province and prerogative of the latter, and that pleaſantry was incompatible with dignity of character in the other: but there need no words to prove the contrary of this to thoſe who have an opportunity of ſeeing Mrs. *Woffington* in the character of *Berinthia*.

It is ſcarce a leſs error to ſuppoſe, as ſome do, that the graces we have been recommending to the attention of the player who wiſhes to excel in comedy, are peculiar to the higher characters in it, and that no performer has any buſineſs with them, who acts any thing leſs than the capital parts. We expect more or leſs of them in almoſt every character; every object that can be offer'd to us is capable of ſome kind of perfection; and it is an univerſal law of the ſtage, that nothing ſhould be preſented on it that is not as perfect as it can be in its nature: every player is to make his character reſemble that of people in the way of life out of which the author has taken it, but then he is to make the reſemblance as perfect and at the ſame time as agreeable as he can; he is a kind of portrait painter, whoſe buſineſs it is always to draw a handſome likeneſs: we except

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thoſe characters which the authors have meant to affect us in the contrary manner; and ſetting theſe aſide, every thing that is repreſented on the ſtage is to be repreſented in its faireſt light.

CHAP. XIX.

Obſervations on ſome Parts of the Art of Playing, of a ſubordinate Kind to thoſe we have hitherto been treating of.

AFTER we have attempted to deſcribe ſeverally the more eminent parts of the player's art, it remains that we ſpeak of ſome others leſs worthy our regard, yet not leſs neceſſary to perſons in the profeſſion.

In the preceding chapters we have conſidered what is eſſential to an actor relatively to the characters which he has to repreſent; we ſhall in this, take into conſideration what he ought to be careful of, independently of the effect that he expects this or that particular character, which he acts, ſhould produce.

Of whatever nature he intends that effect to be, he can never ſucceed in it without a diſtinct articulation of voice.

The power of marking to an audience, by ſeveral judicious panſes, the ſenſe of what is ſpoken, and of giving to every part of a ſentence only juſt ſo much time as it ought to have, is not leſs eſſential to the delivery than the care of being articulate. Nothing can be ſo provoking as to find a noble ſentiment converted into nonſenſe or abſurdity in the mouth of the ſpeaker; and yet this is a provocation that no man ever ſaw the maſque of *Comus*, or the tragedy of *Othello*, perform'd

form'd without, for theſe twenty years in the ſubordinate parts; while, as to the principal characters, we have ſeen them perform'd by one whoſe thorough ſenſe of their beauties ſeems to declare him able even to have wrote them. The editions of our plays are many of them ſo faulty, that what we charge upon the performers ought often rather to be laid upon the books they ſtudy their parts in: a man may very well be able to play a third or fourth character, even in tragedy, who is not qualify'd to criticiſe upon the blunders of an editor; the care of this matter is much too weighty for the officer in a company on whom it is generally laid, that is, the prompter; and it would be very prudent in many of our players, where the ſenſe ſeems dubious to them in any part, to refer themſelves to ſome perſon of judgment who might be able to put them in the way of delivering what they are uncertain about, much better than it is poſſible they otherwiſe ſhould, by explaining it to them, if right; or otherwiſe, by correcting the falſe pointing, or whatever other fault of the edition it may be obſcur'd by.

There falls likewiſe in the way of the player, another kind of punctuation, if it may be ſo call'd, which has nothing to do with grammar or ſyntax, and yet is of almoſt as much conſequence to him as the other; we may call this the premonitory punctuation for long ſentences; this gives rules for the carefully managing a *reſt*, in ſuch manner that the perſons may be able, after it, to deliver a long ſeries of words, which ought, according to their ſenſe, to be ſpoken without interruption, without an unnatural ſtopping to take breath.

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The greateſt players of the preſent age are not without their faults; and what is ſtill more unhappy is, that they are the laſt of all people to mend them: we have obſerv'd, in Mr. *Garrick*, a fault from his very firſt appearance on the ſtage, which is grown up with him, and now much worſe than at firſt; it is a way of reſting in the middle of a line where the ſenſe is continued; ſuch a pauſe is unnatural and hateful. We can eaſily ſee that the reaſon of this is, that this actor has an ambition to give a peculiar emphaſis to every word of a ſentence where he would be peculiarly great in his part; the force of voice which he uſes on this occaſion requires ſo much breath to every ſyllable, that he cannot pronounce more than half a line together. We firſt obſerv'd this in him in King *Richard*; where, in the heat of his fury, he calls out to the archers,

Draw, archers, draw your arrows to the head.

It is eaſy to ſee that a line like this ought to be ſpoken with rapidity, and the whole force of the voice reſerv'd for the laſt word; inſtead of this, Mr. *Garrick* beſtows ſo much breath on the three firſt, that he is forc'd to pauſe to get in more to ſpeak the reſt with, and accordingly he pronounces the line with an unnatural gap in the middle,

Draw, archers, draw—your arrows to the head.

He has not only never mended this fault, but he has fallen into many others of a like kind; any one who remembers him in the late character

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of the *Black Prince* in the new tragedy of the *Battle of Poictiers*, muſt remember more than twenty lines in which he made the ſame unnatural error.

Whoever particularly remembers this ſpeech will recollect the ſeveral pauſes of this unnatural kind which we mark in them,

We'll face theſe numbers, fight them, bravely fall,
E're ſtoop to linger——loathſome life away
In infamy and bondage. Sir, I thank you,
I thank you from my ſoul, for theſe, for me,
That we have met your wiſh to do us kindneſs;
But for the terms our foes demand, we ſcorn
Such vile conditions, and defy their ſwords.
Tell 'em, my lord, their hope's too proudly plum'd,
We muſt be conquer'd--ere they call us captives.
Famine and ſlaughter, let them both advance,
In all their horrid moſt tremendous forms,
They'll meet in us with men who'll ſtarve, bleed, die,
Ere wrong their country or their own renown.
Sound there——to arms.

Three falſe pauſes of this kind, in the compaſs of ſo few lines, offend us ſo much from ſo eminent an actor, that we ſhould not be juſt to ourſelves and to the public if we did not remind him of it.

But it is not enough that the player articulate all his words diſtinctly, and pronounce them with the proper reſts, according to the laws of punctuation; he muſt be peculiarly careful alſo to keep up the concluſions of his ſpeeches. It is natural for the ſtrength of the voice to fail after delivering a whole

whole ſentence; but if the actor be not careful to avoid this defect, all the juſtneſs of ſpeaking in the world will never get him reputation. If we loſe the laſt word of a phraſe, it is often impoſſible for us to ſee all the force of the ſenſe, or to perceive the alluſion the author meant to give us in it to ſomething it refers to.

As it is of conſequence to us to loſe no part of what the player delivers, it is of little leſs that we hear him alſo with pleaſure. We have already deliver'd the grand rules towards his giving an audience that ſatisfaction, but we have not yet enumerated every thing which may hinder his ſucceeding in it.

Would the actor pleaſe univerſally in his ſpeaking, let him remember that an indolent manner of delivery, a frequent and audible catching of breath in a ſentence, a habit of giving too hiſſing a ſound to the letter S, which ſo often recurs in our language, and an affectation of giving weight and force to every ſyllable of a ſentence, are not leſs blemiſhes in ſpeaking, than a conſtant ſameneſs of motion in the hands, is in acting.

We live in an age when men judge ſo very differently from one another, and when every one is ſo very willing to judge for himſelf, that we daily ſee abſurdities of the moſt contrary kinds among the actors who are upon the ſtage in the ſame ſcene: while one player is pedantic in the affecting thus to give ſtrength to every word, whether it require it or not, another makes his part appear cold and inſipid to us, by neglecting to give that force which is requiſite to ſuch words in a ſentence as the ſtrength of the expreſſion peculiarly depends on.

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The neceſſity which every player, who would ſpeak well, is under, of giving a peculiar force to certain words in a ſentence, is not univerſal, or at leaſt it is not equal in all parts, even in tragedy. It peculiarly belongs to thoſe perſons who repreſent the principal and moſt intereſting characters. We have already obſerv'd in diſcourſing on what is call'd bye-play, that the degree of force in the expreſſion in every actor ought to be proportion'd to the degree of intereſt which the character he repreſents has in the play; and in the ſame manner the delivery ought always to be more or leſs ſtrong, according to the more or leſs conſiderable figure the perſon makes in the piece.

They are very much miſtaken therefore who ſuppoſe that the caſe is juſt the ſame in a dialogue that is to be ſpoken, and in one which is to be deliver'd in muſic; or that an actor in anſwering a ſpeech ought to take up the ſame tone, accent, and manner with the perſon who ſpeaks to him: without doubt it is neceſſary that every comedian ſpeak loud enough to be heard; and it is evident from this that there is a modulation of the voice as to ſtrength, below which they are never to ſink, becauſe if they do, every thing they ſay is loſt to a great part of the audience; but this is all the general reſemblance we require between the manner of the two different people who ſpeak together.

Perhaps indeed it is neceſſary in ſcenes of pure reaſoning, or in thoſe between two perſons who are actuated by the ſame impreſſion, that both uſe the ſame tone and modulation of voice in ſpeaking; but on all other occaſions variety is more

more agreeable, more natural, and there is no rule for the forbiding it.

It is much better that the two perſons in every dialogue, except theſe, ſpeak in two different tones of voice; it gives vivacity as well as variety, and is in all reſpects infinitely preferable to a heavy ſameneſs, both in tragedy and in comedy.

The performers in tragedy ought in a particular manner to obſerve this variety of modulation of their voices in the dialogue; they have one reaſon for it, and that almoſt an univerſal one, which the others have not; a ſubject, be his rank or degree ever ſo high, yet in ſpeaking to his king he always throws into his tone of voice the ſubordination and diſtance that he obſerves in his actions; and we may expect the ſame difference on the ſtage between the manner of ſpeaking of the heroe, and of his confident.

The action of the player, as well as his recitation, has alſo ſomething mechanical in it; we may regard in this light the neceſſity he is under of conforming to certain rules preſcrib'd for his geſtures, but which it has not yet fallen in our way to conſider.

In the part of a player whoſe character is intended to intereſt and affect us, the geſtures muſt not only be, as we have before obſerv'd, natural, expreſſive, noble, and varied occaſionally, but it is neceſſary alſo that they be more or leſs freely us'd, according to the length and nature of the paſſages he delivers; they muſt ſucceed one another by a kind of natural connexion; they muſt have an evident alliance together, and each muſt obviouſly appear to be the neceſſary ſequel of that which preceded it, and the preparatory or introductive one to that which follows: the player

muſt particularly obſerve that the peculiar geſture which he uſes to accompany the period of a ſentence does not terminate but with the laſt word, and that the reſt of the hand, as well as of the voice, declares that the perſon has done ſpeaking. Beſide theſe, there are a number of other rules equally invariable; among the reſt we may mention that of avoiding too frequently thoſe geſtures that ſerve to mark the moſt ſtrongly and forcibly ſuch parts of a ſentence as require it: the prudent uſe of theſe gives a peculiar ſtrength to the expreſſion, but the continual abuſe of them will give the nobleſt ſpeech an air of puerility: there are a thouſand other neceſſary regulations in the geſture which are too trivial and obvious to have a place here; a due attention to good examples will give the young player the beſt inſtructions about them.

The art of treading the ſtage, eſpecially in tragedy, is another of the mechanical parts of the buſineſs of an actor, and is particularly of uſe to inform him how to fill the ſtage in a ſoliloquy: we ſhall refer the young player in this article to the ſame means of inſtruction, a good example. The antient comedians who, we are told, mov'd by ſudden jerks and ſprings on the ſtage, are juſtly condemn'd for it: in comedy, he who can walk acroſs a room like a gentleman will be able to do the ſame on the ſtage; but in tragedy there is ſomething more requir'd, and it would be well if every player who performs a principal part in that way, would practiſe for the ſtage a walk that ſhould be much below the mimic dignity of the theatrical ſtrut of the laſt age, and yet ſomewhat more noble than the common ſtep.

CHAP.

CHAP. XX.

OBJECTIONS.

NOtwithſtanding the evidence that the principles we have deliver'd carry with them, it is not impoſſible but ſome players may continue to imagine that their profeſſion is much eaſier than we pretend, and that there are very few difficulties in the way of the man who would riſe to the very firſt character in it. Children, they will obſerve, are frequently applauded on the ſtage, and yet it is impoſſible they ſhould have all the perfections which we have affirm'd to be neceſſary to a player.

It will require very little trouble to anſwer this objection: we are not to deny that we have now and then inſtances of premature talents: a happy natural diſpoſition, a careful and well manag'd education, and continual practice, may ſometimes ſupply the want of years; and it will not appear wonderful that children ſo form'd for the ſtage ſhould ſometimes know better what they are about, than ſome who are grown old upon it; as they may perhaps have taken more pains in the few years they have ſtudy'd the profeſſion, than the others in their whole lives: examples however of children's deſerving great applauſe upon the ſtage are rare, tho' their having ſome is common: in general we applaud them as children, rather than as players, and rather admire the conditions under which they know what they do, than that they know it. Moſt of thoſe who have been beſt received among us, with much more merit, and a few more

years over their heads, would appear much worſe than they do under the advantage of ſo young a time of life.

A ſecond objection to the difficulty of attaining the art of playing, will perhaps be made in regard to the actreſſes, ſince it is evident, people will ſay, that women who have paſs'd their lives in idleneſs and debauchery, have often riſen to the character of very great players. In order to argue juſtly on this point, we are firſt to enquire whether the perſons thus applauded on the ſtage, have really had that merit which the applauſe they receive ſeems to allow in them: we have prov'd, in the beginning of this treatiſe, that many players have much better underſtandings than the world ſuppoſes them to have, and that, in general, people who are well receiv'd, as players, either have natural accompliſhments which we don't ſee, or they have taken pains that we don't know of; or if neither of theſe by the caſe, that the applauſe is given them undeſervedly, and we are therefore not to allow it as any evidence of merit: we ſhall on this occaſion go yet farther and obſerve, that even with the advantage of a good underſtanding, if a woman does not improve herſelf by application and ſtudy, ſhe will never arrive at any degree of perfection.

Let it be own'd that an actreſs whoſe courſe of life has been ſuch as allow'd her no time for the ſtudy of her buſineſs, has yet charm'd the people who ſaw her play, we are not to conclude from this that ſhe had a vaſt deal of merit; the multitude are eaſily deceiv'd, eſpecially when there is a good face in the way; ſuppoſe even the poets have extoll'd the merit of ſuch an actreſs, we ought no more to judge from this than from the other,

other, they may have been ſeduc'd by the ſame means with the reſt of the world; and it may be added, we have known poets who have been as little judges of playing as the beaux themſelves; and that the heart may have been in many caſes charm'd inſtead of the underſtanding.

A third objection, more formidable than either of theſe, may be rais'd from what paſſes every hour of our lives before us among the generality of mankind; we ſee people who have never ſtudy'd ſpeaking, yet in common converſation giving the proper tone of voice, and the proper accent to every ſentiment; and it will be aſk'd, Why may not the player as well do this juſtice to the ſentiments which are given him to deliver on the ſtage, without all this apparatus which we have deliver'd as neceſſary in order to it?

Our anſwer to this objection will be ſhort. The man whom we obſerve in ſpeaking to have the moſt juſt, regular, and varied inflexions of voice, often reads very ill, even his own writings; and they who read well will allow, that there requires a great deal of time and practice to arrive at the art of reading many things as they ought to be read; particularly fables, ſtories, or plays written in rhyme and meaſure. Our clergy, tho' they generally ſpeak well in common converſation, yet frequently read their ſermons ſo ill, that people are induc'd to ſuſpect they are not their own. If there are ſo many difficulties, as hence it appears there certainly are, in barely reading more than in common ſpeaking, how many muſt there needs be in playing, which is to common reading what a finiſh'd picture is to a firſt rough draught in chalk?

CHAP. XXI.

Some Remarks which may be of Service to certain modern Actors.

THE more difficulty there is in the repreſentation of dramatic writings, the more neceſſary it is to the player to know his own ſtrength, and not to attempt any thing beyond what he may be able to go through.

The *Engliſh* ſtage has from time to time ſhew'd us a kind of *Proteus's* capable of aſſuming every form they pleas'd, and of excelling in every different branch of their profeſſion; we have ſeen in Mr. *Garrick*, a genius capable of all things that the ſtage can require, able to charm us in every character from *Richard* III. to *Abel Drugger*, and equally form'd to affect, to entertain, and divert us, equally able to make us laugh, and to call forth our tears: one would be apt to ſay that nature has crowded ſeveral different men into this little body.

We have ſome players who, if they would keep themſelves within their proper bounds, would be able to do a great deal, but, who attempting, after the example of theſe maſterly actors, to fall into every thing, can never excel in any thing, but remain middling in every character they attempt.

Others we have of a more modeſt turn, who chuſe for themſelves only one kind of characters, and bend all their ſtudy to excell in thoſe; but very unluckily for ſome of theſe, we find that they have fixed upon that ſet of characters, which nature has of all others the leaſt qualify'd them for excel-

excelling in. An actreſs perhaps has a good underſtanding, a readineſs in her manner, and a great deal of the fineſſe of playing appropriated to genteel comedy. She excells in characters of this ſtile, and muſt always do ſo. She wants that pertneſs that characteriſes the people cut out for the *Phyllis*'s of the ſtage: But if ſhe will perform the *Phyllis* and neglect the *Lady Townley*, what is ſhe to expect for this, but the contempt ſhe deſerves?

Out of hope of ſucceeding in theſe characters, tho' ſhe have neither the neceſſary elevation of ſoul, nor ſufficient command of voice for tragedy, ſhe will attempt that; and tho' of all people in the world not cut out for the ſublime, or the pathetick, ſhe will ſpeak the words intended to convey ſuch Ideas. The audience, captivated with the ſight of a fine figure dreſs'd to a peculiar advantage, forget the player and applaud the woman: She miſinterprets the praiſe, and fancies all the heroines of the ſtage are nothing to her, till falling into ſome one of her old and proper parts again, ſhe is awak'd to a ſenſe of herſelf, by finding the applauſe there double to what it was before.

A player of the other ſex has a great ſtrength of voice and force of expreſſion. He is cut out by nature to perform the general or the heroe, but he will be nothing but the lover. *Cato* wou'd ſound well from his mouth, but his heart will think of nothing but *Juba*. Another is cut out by nature to be uſeful rather than ornamental on the ſtage; he is form'd only for the ſubaltern characters, but he will act none but thoſe of kings and heroes. We have ſeen more than one player ruin'd by this ſort of folly:

Where the intereſts of a company give ſuch a man a power of chuſing, or where he finds the way to the weak ſide of a manager, the credit of the whole body ſuffers by it.

A man of great uſe at one of the theatres was ſome time ſince going to run in a rage to the other houſe, becauſe where he was, they offer'd him only ſecond characters, and in the other where they wanted him, he was to play many of the firſt: He conſulted a friend on the ſubject, who had ſincerity enough to tell him that he was cut out by nature for the ſecond characters, not for the firſt, and wou'd get much more reputation by ſuch, than by ſetting himſelf upon a footing with *Garrick*, and with *Quin*, and giving an opportunity to a compariſon in which he muſt make a very bad figure: He, by his honeſt advice, retain'd him where he was, and where he is reſpected to this day. A ſecond, favour'd conſiderably more than he deſerved in the ſame company, and deaf to every thing but the offer of the firſt parts, purſu'd his road of vanity, and is gone. To what purpoſe? to be deſpis'd and laugh'd at in firſt characters, inſtead of being applauded and eſteem'd in thoſe he was qualify'd for.

The CONCLUSION.

To what has been ſaid in this treatiſe, we might add the examination of many other queſtions relative to the ſubject, and which may be naturally enough ſtarted from reading what we have ſaid of it. Some of the principal of theſe, it may be not amiſs to anſwer. We have juſt obſerved of ſome particular players, that the choice

choice of parts ſeems altogether a matter of indifference in regard to them; that they are equally cut out for all, and able to command the ſame applauſe in all; it may be aſked however, whether a player of this kind wou'd not have excell'd yet much more, if inſtead of playing trajedy and comedy alternately, he had apply'd himſelf ſolely to one of them? The cuſtom of the preſent times requires it indeed of the player to be able to do both; but it wou'd certainly be better in general if the beſt performers wou'd confine themſelves to one of the two ſo very different branches of their profeſſion; each of them requiring a long and labour'd application and ſtudy in order to the executing it well; and the one often requiring accompliſhments ſo very different from thoſe neceſſary to the other. The man who is wholly unfit to ſucceed in the one, is yet often cut out well enough for ſhining in the other: Nay, we may go ſo far as to affirm it impoſſible for the ſame man to excell in tragedy, and to be as perfect in ſome parts in the comic writings, as others of infinitely leſs talents, only better appropriated to thoſe parts, may be.

We all remember the late Mr. *Hippiſley*'s merit in comedy, yet perhaps no body ever wiſh'd to ſee him in the buſkin; and we cannot but acknowledge that Mr. *Yates* at preſent plays the part of the *Lying Valet* vaſtly better even than Mr. *Garrick*, tho' it is a character of that gentleman's own writing; yet we ſhou'd hold the former of theſe in a very contemptible light if he were for this reaſon to attempt to rival the other in *Macbeth* or in *Hamlet*.

We remember Mr. *Delane* to have charm'd us in *Alexander*; and in *Hotſpur* to have excell'd every

every body in that character; but we were not quite ſo fond of the figure he made in a *Viſcount Aimwell*. The man who has a ſtrength of voice and dignity of figure proper for ſuch characters as the former, wou'd certainly play them better if never taken off by things leſs fit for him; and this gentleman's reputation wou'd unqueſtionably have been much higher than it was, and the manager of the houſe he belong'd to wou'd have been a greater gainer by him, if he had play'd only theſe ſort of characters; and another, whom we need not name, had never been ſuffer'd to rant and roar away, in what he thinks the majeſty of tragedy, that credit he might have obtain'd by confining himſelf to the parts he was firſt tolerably receiv'd in.

When we remember the manner in which Mr. *Delane* ſpoke his reſolution to deny the king his priſoners, and his determination to torment and plague him.

I'll keep them all,
By heaven he ſhall not have a Scot of them;
No, if a Scot would ſave his ſoul he ſhall not.

He ſaid he wou'd not ranſom *Mortimer*.

Forbid my tongue to ſpeak of *Mortimer*,
But I will find him when he lies aſleep,
And in his ear I'll hollow *Mortimer*.
All ſtudies here I ſolemnly defy
Save how to gall and pinch this *Bolingbroke*.

or the force and fire with which he delivered the ſpeech; a line or two of which we have quoted againſt a very different ſort of player in a former part of this work.

By

By heaven methinks it were an eaſy leap,
To pluck bright honour from the pale-fac'd moon,
Or dive into the bottom of the deep,
Where fathom line could never touch the ground;
And pluck up drowned honour by the locks.
So he that doth redeem her thence might wear
Without corival all her dignities.

We cannot but wiſh he had never been confin'd to ſpeak any other language.

A ſecond queſtion may be propoſed here as ariſing naturally from the former. Is it more eaſy for a player to diſtinguiſh himſelf in tragedy or in comedy? To this it may be anſwer'd, the natural advantages which an audience equally expects to find the players in tragedy and in comedy poſſeſs'd of, ought however always to be more eminent, and more perfect in their kind, in thoſe in the former way, than they need be in thoſe who act in the latter. There are alſo beſide theſe advantages which are requir'd in common to both, ſome that are peculiar to the player in tragedy, and are much more rare than the others; the natural conſequence of this is, that we meet with more people in the world cut out for ſhining in comedy, than for excelling in tragedy. 'Tis equally certain however, that the care of the geſtures and deportment are of as much conſequence to the comedian as to the tragedian; and require as much ſtudy and attention for the one as for the other; and that as to the fineſſes of playing, which are of the number of the moſt difficult articles in the profeſſion, they require more from the comedian than

than from the other. We ſpeak here of the fineſſes requir'd in the nicer ſcenes; for as to the parts where there is no great theatrical action neceſſary, or which are mere converſations and reaſonings, theſe may be always play'd with much ſucceſs, and with little trouble, even by players of a very moderate ſhare of merit, provided they have a little knowledge of the world, and a tolerable underſtanding.

Upon the whole, there are peculiar requiſites to the excelling in way; but thoſe neceſſary to the playing tragedy, are more numerous, and are either more difficultly acquir'd, or more rarely had from nature; and thence we are to conclude that the excelling in this way, is what much fewer people can pretend to than in the other.

Suppoſing an actor devotes himſelf principally to tragedy, what ſort of characters will he find it moſt eaſy to excell in? Thoſe of *Shakeſpear*, or thoſe of the later writers, *Rowe*, *Otway*, and the reſt? The player is in a great meaſure able to anſwer this queſtion to himſelf. He will find the one appear much more natural and eaſy to him than the other, and on examining his own natural accompliſhments, he will eaſily perceive which of them he is the moſt calculated for. If he have a great deal of tenderneſs in his temper, and be naturally of an amorous turn; he will ſucceed moſt eaſily with the latter authors: If he find the great and the majeſtick ſtrike more ſtrongly upon him; and feel himſelf affected by nature as dreſs'd up with ſcarce any ornaments but her own; and if to this he have *force* and *feeling* in a conſidera-

ble

ble degree, *Shakeſpear* is the author he ought to ſtudy, and will moſt excell in playing.

From the anſwers we have given to theſe three natural and important queſtions, it may be concluded, that in order to a play's being repreſented in the greateſt perfection, it is neceſſary to have people in the company not only qualify'd for performing in all kinds of pieces, but alſo for every particular kind of parts in each.

From this conſequence we ſhall draw another, which may ſerve as a concluſion to this treatiſe: We are apt to complain that ſome of our very good actors, who from the neceſſities of the houſes are obliged to play an almoſt infinite number of different characters, are not quite ſo excellent in ſome of them, as they are in others. But we miſapply the wonder; we ought, on the contrary, to be ſurpriz'd, that being oblig'd to be continually ſtudying new parts, they play ſo many as they do extremely well. Let us honeſtly and candidly then change our ſentiments on this ſubject, and inſtead of cenſuring them for ſucceeding leſs in ſome of their parts, give them the praiſe they deſerve, for performing well in ſo many.

Another thing that the modern audiences for their own ſakes ought alſo to avoid, is the ſeverity we ſee ſometimes us'd in diſcouraging young players who attempt great characters, and do not ſucceed in them quite ſo well as thoſe who have perform'd them a hundred times oftener: We ought to encourage in theſe aſpiring genius's, provided they have ſome merit and the neceſſary requiſites from nature, that ambition which tho' too forward at preſent, will very probably in time ſhew them the way to our higheſt applauſes.

Another

Another thing which we ought as carefully to avoid, is the too common folly of admiring the actors of an age or two ago, much more than they were admir'd while living; and looking upon every thing that is done now as inferior to what was perſorm'd in their time.

'Tis a very diſcouraging circumſtance to an actor to know, that do what he will, he is ſtill to be look'd on as inferior to ſome body elſe who is dead, and therefore cannot be brought to the teſt of compariſon. There is great reaſon to believe that we have at leaſt five or ſix players at preſent equal to any of thoſe we hear ſo greatly commended, and we ought, in juſtice to ourſelves and them, to own it.

Where our complaints are juſt, and we have room to think they may occaſion the amendment of errors, let us not ſpare them: Let us acknowledge that among the capital parts of the modern theatre, ſome ought to be play'd with more truth, others with more ſpirit, and ſome with more graces: But let us not deceive ourſelves ſo far as to ſuppoſe that there were not grounds for wiſhes of the ſame kind in the days of *Wilks*, of *Booth* and *Betterton*.

FINIS.

MVSEVM BRITAN NICVM